the weekly
Standard

DECEMBER 25, 2006 $3.95

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE BIRD FLU?
MICHAEL FUMENTO

Happy 400th, Rembrandt!

BY Algis Valiunas

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In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Iraq: Last Chance

A political settlement before any withdrawal

To concede that going to war in Iraq was a grave mistake of policy is not to embrace the conclusion that an immediate pullout—or one by a declared date moderated by conditions on the ground—would today serve U.S. interests. The country may have entered the war with erroneous notions of the state of Saddam's WMD programs. It may have underestimated the resilience of former Baathists and regime loyalists, their access to weapons, and the help they would get from foreign jihadists. It may have failed to anticipate that a society divided and oppressed by an authoritarian ruler might erupt into ethnic and religious conflict when that leader departs. It may have been naive in thinking that an externally modeled Iraqi democratic government would opt for secular rather than sectarian parliamentary representation and that its near-perfect transition would transform the region into a galaxy of democratic states. And it may have underestimated the number of troops needed to occupy a country of 25 million. Yet the answer is not to compound those mistakes by leaving in a way that makes large-scale civil war nearly inevitable, pushes the country into the lap of its Iranian neighbor, or advertises the United States as an unreliable friend, a hesitant hegemon, and a rewarder of those terrorists with the tenacity to outlast the behemoth. No, when a great power puts its leg in a snare, there must be some cure other than amputation.

—Robert Zelnick

The Scapegoats among Us

Blame-shifting after 9/11

To judge by current intellectual trends, many post-9/11 attempts to diagnose the American soul, both here and in Europe, have served less to clarify reality than to gravitate toward safer and more palatable substitutes. It is a fraught, fascinating spectacle worth exploring in detail—the more so because a parallel outpouring of books, especially from the contemporary European front, makes very clear what today's obvious displacements of political passion are really about.

—Mary Eberstadt

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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the weekly Standard

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2006, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Remembering a Heroic Navy SEAL

Four weeks ago, to accompany Michael Fumento's report from Ramadi, we featured on our cover a combat photo of two Navy SEALs, taken by Fumento during an April 22, 2006, firefight, while on an earlier reporting trip to Iraq's Anbar province. One of the two SEALs in the photo, Michael A. Monsoor, was killed in action on September 29. Monsoor, as we noted then, was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for his courage under fire while conducting counterinsurgency operations in eastern Ramadi on May 9. Now, Fumento informs THE SCRAPBOOK, the fallen SEAL has been submitted for the nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, for his actions during the fight that took his life.

The Navy's narrative of Monsoor's heroic self-sacrifice that day reads as follows: "On 29 September, Monsoor was part of a sniper overwatch security position in eastern Ramadi, Iraq, with three other SEALs and eight Iraqi soldiers. They were providing overwatch security while joint and combined forces were conducting missions in the area. Ramadi had been a violent and intense area for a very strong and aggressive insurgency for some time. All morning long the overwatch position received harassment fire that had become a typical part of the day for the security team. Around midday, the exterior of the building was struck by a single rocket propelled grenade (RPG), but no injuries to any of the overwatch personnel were sustained. The overwatch couldn't tell where the RPG came from and didn't return fire.

Michael Fumento

Michael A. Monsoor, with M-249 SAW

"A couple of hours later, an insurgency fighter closed on the overwatch position and threw a fragment grenade into the overwatch position which hit Monsoor in the chest before falling in front of him. Monsoor yelled 'grenade' and dropped on top of the grenade prior to it exploding. Monsoor's body shielded the others from the brunt of the fragmentation blast and two other SEALs were only wounded by the remaining blast.

"One of the key aspects of this incident was the way the overwatch position was structured. There was only one access point for entry or exit and Monsoor was the only one who could have saved himself from harm. Instead, knowing what the outcome could be, he fell on the grenade to save the others from harm. Monsoor and the two injured were evacuated to the combat outpost battalion aid station where Monsoor died approximately 30 minutes after the incident from injuries sustained by the grenade blast." ♦

Jeane Kirkpatrick Was Right

Inaccuracy and bias had a field day in the reporting of the careers of Jeane Kirkpatrick and Augusto Pinochet, who died just days apart earlier this month. Predictably, the old slander against Ronald Reagan's first ambassador to the United Nations—that she was an enthusiast of autocratic government—turned up: To take just one example, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (apparently recycling a distortion by the Associated Press) claimed that she supported the military junta in El Salvador, when she and the Reagan administration in fact strongly supported the historic elections and the democratically elected Duarte government there. And one could take in multiple accounts of the nefarious deeds of the late Chilean strongman and never learn that the nasty general finally acceded to pressure to restore democracy, notably from the Reagan State Department. He left power peacefully after gaining 43 percent of the vote in a 1988 plebiscite.

But the grownups on the editorial page of the *Washington Post* redeemed the press with their fine editorial on December 12. After rehearsing Pinochet's role in the 1973 overthrow of socialist president Salvador Allende and the subsequent brutal repression, the *Post* continues:

> It's hard not to notice, however, that the evil dictator leaves behind the most successful country in Latin America. In the past 15 years, Chile's economy has grown at twice the regional average, and its poverty rate has been halved. . . . It also has a vibrant democracy. Earlier this year it elected another socialist president, Michelle Bachelet, who suffered persecution during the Pinochet years.
>
> Like it or not, Mr. Pinochet had something to do with this success. To the dismay of every economic minister in Latin America, he introduced the free-market policies that produced the Chilean economic miracle—and that not even Allende's socialist successors have dared reverse. He also accepted a transition to democracy, stepping down peacefully in 1990 after losing a referendum.
>
> By way of contrast, Fidel Castro—Mr. Pinochet's nemesis and a hero to

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many in Latin America and beyond—will leave behind an economically ruined and freedomless country with his approaching death. Mr. Castro also killed and exiled thousands. But even when it became obvious that his communist economic system had impoverished his country, he refused to abandon that system: He spent the last years of his rule reversing a partial liberalization. To the end he also imprisoned or persecuted anyone who suggested Cubans could benefit from freedom of speech or the right to vote.

The contrast between Cuba and Chile more than 30 years after Mr. Pinochet's coup is a reminder of a famous essay written by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, the provocative and energetic scholar and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who died Thursday. In "Dictatorships and Double Standards," . . . Mrs. Kirkpatrick argued that right-wing dictators such as Mr. Pinochet were ultimately less malign than communist rulers, in part because their regimes were more likely to pave the way for liberal democracies. She, too, was vilified by the left. Yet by now it should be obvious: She was right.

And, we should add, on this one the *Post* was right, too. ♦

Great Moments in Public Relations

Turki al-Faisal has stepped down as Saudi ambassador to the United States to "spend more time with his family," according to an embassy spokesman. That hoary cliche, though, is not why we are granting the Saudi potentate THE SCRAPBOOK's coveted "Great Moments in Public Relations" award. No, just days before he got the sack, Turki fired Saudi consultant Nawaf Obaid for a controversial op-ed published in the *Washington Post* by Obaid. Obaid included the usual disclaimer that the views expressed were his own. But to no avail. Turki offered this priceless explanation for cutting Obaid loose: "We felt that we could add more credibility to his claims as an independent contractor by terminating our consultancy agreement with him." ♦

Some Reporters

Sometimes it's hard to determine a reporter's agenda. Sometimes it's not. For an example of the latter, we turn to a story from the Associated Press. After President Bush consulted with the Joint Chiefs of Staff last week on troop levels in Iraq, the AP's Robert Burns filed a dispatch with the following paragraph. "After a third straight day of soliciting war advice from top military and diplomatic officials, Bush gave no clue as to whether he will include that in his forthcoming plan. Some generals believe it would be too little, too late, in a war that already has claimed more than 2,900 U.S. lives." It is no doubt true "some generals" believe this. It is equally true that "some generals" do not. In fact, a reporter could finish a sentence beginning "some generals believe" with just about anything the reporter wants. Which is the point, of course. And it's one more reason some generals believe the Associated Press is no longer a credible news outlet. ♦

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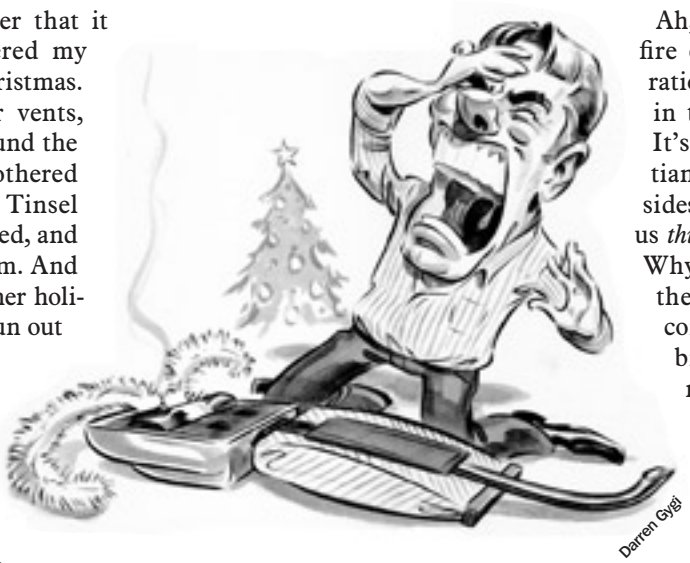
Casual

Wrapping Paper Rapture

Tinsel. No one needs tinsel. Even the word is a tinselly kind of word. It ought to have been a mild profanity, suitable for bridge clubs and 1950s sorority girls: "Oh, tinsel, I forgot my keys again, Janie." Instead, it names one of the most destructive substances known to humankind. Originally made from lead foil—till somebody finally noticed that it was turning children's livers purple and green—the loathsome stuff evolved through various aluminum incarnations to become the plastic killer that it is today. Tinsel murdered my vacuum cleaner this Christmas. Sucked up into the air vents, tinsel wrapped itself around the motor, melted, and smothered the helpless appliance. Tinsel smoked, and tinsel sparked, and tinsel set off the fire alarm. And now, on top of all the other holiday expenses, I have to run out and buy a new vacuum cleaner. Oh … tinsel.

I should probably pick up more wrapping paper while I'm out. There's never enough of the stuff. Has anyone else noticed something sick, something slightly disturbed, about wrapping paper? It's a neurosis, really: this desire to grab anything that isn't moving and swaddle it in oddly printed sheets of red and green. A genuine case of hebephrenia, I think, but I can't be sure because my reference books have all been shoved back on their shelves to make room for the piles of tissue paper, rolls of bright ribbons, and endless tubes of wrapping paper.

My wife and daughter are both mad wrappers. They love the whole panoply of Christmas coverings. They box, bedeck, and bundle. They camouflage, cloak, and case. They drape, enfold, mask, muffle, pack, sheathe, shroud, and veil. There's my daughter, happy as a bird, perched at the dining-room table, hand-coloring paper to wrap the hand-painted box that holds the hand-made present she prepared for her great-grandmother. The tip of her tongue sneaks to the corner of her mouth in her concentration, and she hums with the carols she's put on the CD player to help her along.



It's cute as a button, I know, but I still don't get it. I mean, nearly every purchased gift comes pre-packaged in plastic and brightly printed cardboard, or nestled in a nice little box, and usually shrink-wrapped as well. And as soon as we buy it, we immediately swaddle it in yet more layers of extraneous material: cotton batting, and tissue paper, and wraps, and boxes, and containers. My daughter spent weeks working on her presents—and now weeks more working on their wrapping, abetted by her mother: "I know, honey! Let's pack your aunts' presents in tissue paper and put them inside these nice little bags with the string handles! That way you can paint Christmas designs on the bags, too!"

Oh, goody. The mailman just brought the annual package from friends in Wyoming. Why do we have to open it? We know what it is. There's the brown grocery-bag paper, which covers the corrugated-cardboard box, which contains the Styrofoam peanuts, which bury the red and green wrapping paper, which surrounds the tin cookie box, which holds the sheets of wax paper, which envelop the homemade sugar cookies. The same homemade sugar cookies our friends send every year. All of which will be broken, because sugar cookies just don't travel well. I think I would have preferred a tasteful card.

Ah, well. Christmas comes like a fire every year—a burning declaration of warmth and brightness in the December cold and dark. It's a stance, really, for Christians, a theological choosing of sides: Against the Fall, God gave us *this*, and with *this* we will stand. Why should it be a surprise that the theology has psychological consequences? A preference for bright colors, a wish to decorate and adorn, a hunger for extravagance, a desire for celebration.

On Christmas Day, after Mass, I'll see the tree all gussied up, a bandits' den of brightly colored gifts underneath it. I'll watch my daughter open her presents—gently and carefully, not wanting to tear the pretty wrappings. I'll smell the Christmas dinner beginning in the kitchen and hear the old familiar anthems play. I'll look around in satisfaction at the wild mess of wrapping paper and opened packages and stray pine needles and scattered crumbs of sugar cookies. And, of course, I'll remember that I forgot to buy the new vacuum cleaner to clean it all up. Tinsel.

Joseph Bottum

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the weekly Standard

'We're Going to Win'

It turns out you only have to attend a White House Christmas party to find out where President Bush is headed on Iraq. One guest who shook hands with Bush in the receiving line told him, "Don't let the bastards get you down." Bush, slightly startled but cheerful, replied, "Don't worry. I'm not." The guest followed up: "I think we can win in Iraq." The president's reply was emphatic: "We're going to win." Another guest informed Bush he'd given some advice to the Iraq Study Group, and said its report should be ignored. The president chuckled and said he'd made his position clear when he appeared with British prime minister Tony Blair. The report had never mentioned the possibility of American victory. Bush's goal in Iraq, he said at the photo-op with Blair, is "victory."

Now Bush is ready to gamble his presidency on a last-ditch effort to defeat the Sunni insurgency and establish a sustainable democracy in Iraq. He is prepared to defy the weary wisdom of Washington that it's too late, that the war in Iraq is lost, and that Bush's lone option is to retreat from Iraq as gracefully and with as little loss of face as possible. Bush only needed what his press secretary, Tony Snow, called a "plan for winning." Now he has one.

It's not to be found among the 79 recommendations of Jim Baker's Iraq Study Group. The ISG report was tossed aside by the White House. Nor was the scheme leaked by the Pentagon last week ever close to being adopted. That plan would pull thousands of American troops out of a combat role and turn them into trainers of the Iraqi army. The result would be increased sectarian violence and an Iraqi army not yet equipped to quash the swelling insurgency–leading to a gap of time in which there would likely be a further—probably fatal—collapse of civic order in Baghdad, and then elsewhere in Iraq.

Last Monday Bush was, at last, briefed on an actual plan for victory in Iraq, one that is likely to be implemented. Retired General Jack Keane, the former vice chief of staff of the Army, gave him a thumbnail sketch of it during a meeting of five outside experts at the White House. The president's reaction, according to a senior adviser, was "very positive." Authored by Keane and military expert Frederick W. Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute, the plan (which can be read at *aei.org/publication25292*) is well thought-out and detailed, but fundamentally quite simple. It is based on the idea—all but indisputable at this point—that no political solution is possible in Iraq until security is established, starting in Baghdad. The reverse—a bid to forge reconciliation between majority Shia and minority Sunni—is a nonstarter in a political environment drenched in the blood of sectarian killings.

Why would the Keane-Kagan plan succeed where earlier efforts failed? It envisions a temporary addition of 50,000 troops on the ground in Iraq. The initial mission would be to secure and hold the mixed Baghdad neighborhoods of Shia and Sunni residents where most of the violence occurs. Earlier efforts had cleared many of those sections of the city without holding them. After which, the mass killings resumed. Once neighborhoods are cleared, American and Iraqi troops in this plan would remain behind, living day-to-day among the population. Local government leaders would receive protection and rewards if they stepped in to provide basic services. Safe from retaliation by terrorists, residents would begin to cooperate with the Iraqi government. The securing of Baghdad would be followed by a full-scale drive to pacify the Sunni-majority Anbar province.

The truth is that not all of Iraq needs to be addressed by an increased American presence. Most of southern Iraq and all of the Kurdish north are close to being free of sectarian violence. It's Baghdad that has become the "center of gravity" for the insurgency, according to Keane. And it could be brought under control by the end of 2007.

The Keane-Kagan plan is not revolutionary. Rather, it is an application of a counterinsurgency approach that has proved to be effective elsewhere, notably in Vietnam. There, Gen. Creighton Abrams cleared out the Viet Cong so successfully that the South Vietnamese government took control of the country. Only when Congress cut off funds to South Vietnam in 1974 were the North Vietnamese able to win.

Before Bush announces his "new way forward" in Iraq in early January, he wants to be assured of two things. The first is that his plan can succeed. Initial evaluations of the Keane-Kagan plan at the Pentagon and elsewhere in the government have been positive. Alone among proposals for Iraq, the new Keane-Kagan strategy has a chance to succeed. Bush's second concern is to avert an explosion of opposition on Capitol Hill. Because this plan offers a credible prospect of winning in Iraq, moderate Democrats and queasy Republicans, the White House thinks, will be inclined to stand back and let Bush give it a shot.

The sooner Bush orders the plan into action, the better chances are that next Christmas he'll be telling White House guests that winning in Iraq is not just a goal. It could actually be happening.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

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A Note from Falluja

Here in Falluja, Iraq, I have been following closely the series of articles written by William Kristol, Fred Barnes, Frederick W. Kagan, Reuel Marc Gerecht, and others. They have written the most accurate assessments of our current situation on the ground. I tell you with full certainty that we are at a true crossroads out here, and it would do the United States well to listen to the advice of such men as yourselves, advice that can be summed up in one sentence: Send more troops to establish real security in the cities so that we may provide more time and logistics for the Iraqi army and police to train effectively before they take control of those cities. I'm not sure this message is reaching those it should.

I have seen some dark days recently. Just this month, I attended two memorial services—one today for a female major (also a triathlete) who was killed in Ramadi last week, and another last week for two soldiers who were part of our Camp Vallejo Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The latter two were 20 and 22 years old, and the major, whom I knew as an acquaintance, was only three weeks younger than I. On top of that, I witnessed the killing of a civilian 75 meters from where I was sitting by a 120 mm mortar five weeks ago. Let me tell you, the impacts were loud! We knew it was incoming right away, but there was nothing to do: It is truly a helpless feeling to hear the incoming sirens after an impact.

About three to four weeks ago I had a series of conversations with numerous peers who all agreed that things must change on the ground. I also read Frederick W. Kagan's "No Third Way in Iraq" (Nov. 13), which concisely stated why we are here and why we have to stay no matter what. It was exactly what I needed to read at that point in this deployment. Kagan actually managed to change my thought process regarding our problems in Iraq.

At least someone is posing a plausible solution to the endless violence. Unfortunately, Kagan's predictions of what may happen if we abandon the cities too soon may indeed prove true if we continue on our current course. We have some serious problems, and

unless we do something drastic to change our current course of action, unless we provide a secure environment, there is a good chance Iraq will succumb to the worst sectarian violence as soon as we leave. We need The Weekly Standard's writers and thinkers to continue to press on in attempting to influence the quagmire that is Washington politics. Your efforts mean a lot to those of us on the ground who want to fight this reckless evil and crush it where it hides in the towns and cities.

From a Marine officer on active duty
(name withheld)
Falluja, Iraq

Go-Time for Generals

Regarding Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol's "Time for a Heavier Footprint" (Nov. 27): It's about time someone criticized Gen. John Abizaid—in fact, Gen. George Casey should be included in the criticism, too. *No True Glory*, an account of the battle of Falluja by military scholar and Vietnam veteran Bing West, shows how many erroneous decisions were made by Gen. Abizaid and Paul Bremer. They had a chance to kill Moktada al-Sadr but didn't do it because they feared being wrong. They also delayed the attack on Falluja, which resulted in heavy Marine losses. Gens. Abizaid and Casey have had their heads in the sand long enough. I blame President Bush for letting these two lead American troops. Rumsfeld is gone; now they should be gone, too.

T. Kevin Moriarty
Libertyville, Ill.

• • •

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The Chicken Littles Were Wrong

The bird flu threat flew the coop.

BY MICHAEL FUMENTO

It's that time of year again—avian flu panic season. As the weather turns colder in the northern hemisphere and the flu starts making its annual rounds, the media and their anointed health experts are chirping and squawking once again about how we could be blindsided by a pandemic that some have estimated could kill a billion persons worldwide. New books like *The Coming Avian Flu Pandemic* join last year's *The Monster at Our Door: The Global Threat of Avian Flu*.

A year ago in these pages I clucked at all this, laying out the evidence that the alarmists were wrong, that avian influenza type H5N1 would not become readily transmissible from human to human and therefore not become pandemic—meaning a global epidemic. (See "Fuss and Feathers: Pandemic Panic over the Avian Flu," November 21, 2005.) Some of the arguments I made have quietly caught on. For instance, health officials, including National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Dr. Anthony Fauci, no longer talk about an "overdue pandemic" (because there is no pattern to when pandemics occur; they are never "due" or "overdue"). But the damage has been done. A Harvard School of Public Health survey of adults who have children revealed that 44 percent think it "likely" or "somewhat likely" there will be "cases of bird flu among humans in the U.S. during the next 12 months." Less than a fifth of respondents considered it "not at all" likely.

Michael Fumento is a writer based in Washington, D.C.

Not coincidentally, an avian flu bureaucracy has become entrenched. Like all bureaucracies, it will fight to survive and thrive, egging on governments to provide ever more money. The alarmingly titled *2006 Guide to Surviving Bird Flu* is published by no less than the Department of Health and Human Services. Never mind that no one in this country has yet even contracted bird flu. Congress last year allocated $3.8 billion to prevent the ballyhooed catastrophe (Bush requested almost twice that amount). The latest "scary news," promulgated in the November 23 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* by über-alarmist Robert Webster of St. Jude Memorial Children's Hospital, is that human cases of H5N1 contracted from birds are continuing to increase. Indeed, confirmed cases for 2006 are running ahead of those for last year. But the difference is slight; 97 worldwide for all of last year versus 111 through the end of November 2006. This difference could be entirely explained by better surveillance. Moreover, the real concern is not sporadic bird-to-human transmission, but human-to-human transmission. Far more people die of tuberculosis in an hour than all those known to have died from H5N1.

So it's time to revisit the allegations and show that as small as the risk was a year ago, it's nevertheless dropped considerably since.

Mutation and Reassortment

A flu pandemic can come about in two ways. One way is for the virus to randomly mutate to become easily transmissible between humans. "Randomly" is the key word here. There are no evolutionary pressures to make H5N1 adapt better to humans. Given enough time, H5N1 might mutate so that it could under the right conditions become pandemic. But that could take millions of years, during which time it would be more likely to mutate itself out of existence. H5N1 was first identified in Scottish chickens in 1959. It has been flying around the globe for close to half a century and hasn't done a number on us yet. There's absolutely no reason to think it will pick this year or next to do so.

Another scenario is that somebody with human flu could contract avian flu at the same time and the two flus could "reassort" into hybrid avian-human flu. The last two flu epidemics in the 20th century—1957-58 and 1968-69—were caused by such hybrids. We can help reduce this possibility by vaccinating as many people as possible (especially Southeast Asian poultry farmers) against human flu, thus reducing the potential number of "mixing vessels." Programs underway to keep farmers away from poultry droppings and spittle (birds don't sneeze or cough) will also help.

Ferreting Out the Truth

A fascinating study in the August 8, 2006, issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* would seem to indicate we're already pretty safe from a human-avian hybrid. Researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted three separate studies with ferrets, which are among the few animals known to suffer from and transmit human flu. The ferrets were infected with several H5N1 strains in addition to a common human influenza virus (H3N2) that circulates almost every year. The infected animals were then either placed in the same cage with uninfected ferrets to test transmissibility by close contact or in adjacent cages with perforated walls to test spread of the virus from respiratory droplets.

The research showed that the H3N2 virus passed easily by droplets (ferrets do sneeze and do not use handkerchiefs) but the H5N1

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virus did not spread—the same thing we're seeing in humans infected with H5N1 from birds.

Separately, the scientists used gene splicing to create a hybrid H5N1/H3N2 virus. In other words, rather than letting nature take its course and seeing if the viruses would reassort, they guaranteed that reassortment occurred. They found these hybrids also did not pass easily between the animals. Moreover, ferrets injected with the reassorted virus showed symptoms less severe than those with the pure avian flu. Reassortment appears to have weakened the virus.

In a final study, CDC researchers passed a hybrid virus through a series of ferrets to see if it would accumulate genetic changes necessary to transmit more easily. This tested the mutation factor. The scientists found this introduced only one genetic change in the virus but didn't enhance its transmissibility.

Other researchers have found the explanation for a phenomenon that was already clear but unexplained—that H5N1 virtually never spreads from human to human and, if it does, it's only after prolonged contact. This contrasts with human flu, which can be contracted via a single cough or sneeze. A *Nature* magazine study published last March found that while avian flu can infect human lungs, it cannot infect most of the cells lining the nose, throat, and sinuses. Moreover, it tends not to penetrate deeply into the lungs. "It has been an enigma why people get sick and die from H5N1 avian flu virus, but the virus does not spread well in humans," study leader and University of Wisconsin virologist Yoshihiro Kawaoka told WebMD. "Our finding explains it."

That Allegedly Horrendous Death Rate

Ersatz experts like Laurie Garrett, a renowned pandemic panic-monger, warn of a horrific mortality rate from the bird flu virus. "Right now in human beings, it kills 55 percent of the people it infects," she told ABC News's *Primetime* last year. St. Jude's alarmist Webster referred to a similar death rate in his *New England Journal of Medicine* article, and the media routinely parrot it. By comparison, the devastating 1918-1919 Spanish flu is believed to have killed 2.5 percent to 5 percent of those it infected. The death rate in a typical flu season is less than 1 percent. It's true that, of bird flu cases recorded by the World Health Organization, 59 percent have died. But this is a mere artifact with an obvious explanation: Only people with the most severe cases go to the hospital and become part of the dataset.

As to what the true mortality rate is, over a three-month period in 2004, Swedish and Vietnamese researchers studied 45,478 residents in a rural district in Vietnam that had H5N1 outbreaks to find out how many had contact with sick birds and how many had flu-like illnesses. They published their results in January 2006 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. They found that of 8,149 who had a flu-like illness, 650 to 750 probably caught it from birds. Yet for all of 2004, the World Health Organization data indicated only 29 Vietnamese cases with 20 deaths. Thus what might seem to be a horrific mortality rate of almost two in three, or 69 percent, appears to be actually around one in 140 or 0.71 percent. This, in the rural portion of a Communist country with a state-run medical system. That 0.71 percent is in the same range as seasonal human flu.

More good news from Vietnam, incidentally, is that it has reported zero cases in 2006. Why? As I wrote last year, "Vietnam appears to be making a heroic effort to inoculate all of its poultry." If you can keep poultry from getting flu, you've knocked down the chance of a human pandemic from close to zero to absolute zero.

Antivirals: Preventing Infection, Preventing Spread

Another risk-reducing development over the past year is the increased availability and evident reliability of Roche's Tamiflu and GlaxoSmithKline's drug Relenza. These drugs interfere with neuraminidase (the 'N' in H5N1), a protein on the surface of the virus that must multiply in order for the virus to multiply. Research at St. Jude's has shown that H5N1 appears to express the highest level of neuraminidase of any flu since 1957, and studies continue to appear showing both drugs can kill two birds with one stone. That is, they are effective both in preventing a person from getting the flu and, if they do get it, from transmitting it.

A review of four of these studies appeared online in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* in November. It showed that preventive administration of Relenza, which is given with an inhaler, reduced the chance of becoming infected by 75 percent, reduced the chance of transmission by 19 percent, and reduced the severity of illness by 52 percent. For Tamiflu, taken as tablets or liquid, preventive administration reduced the chance of becoming infected by 81 percent, reduced the chance of transmission by 80 percent, and reduced the severity of illness by 56 percent. Mind you, these were tests

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against human seasonal flu strains. But because H5N1 expresses such high levels of neuraminidase, there's an excellent chance it would be even more vulnerable to these two antivirals than is human flu. Last year three cases of Tamiflu-resistant H5N1 set off warning bells, but there have been no such cases reported this year.

Naturally all this is great news if you have the drug and take it in time. But the drugs can also be used to prevent a pandemic outbreak. Even a year ago, the World Health Organization had a program in place to quickly detect any outbreak of human avian flu, offering hope of smothering it with antivirals. Writing in *Nature*, researchers predicted that such an outbreak in the area most likely to have one, Southeast Asia, could be snuffed with "a stockpile of 3 million courses" depending on "how quickly cases are diagnosed and the speed with which antiviral drugs can be distributed." The World Health Organization had such a stockpile by early 2006, and assuredly it's much larger now.

A year ago, people and governments were flocking to get Tamiflu in the same way they've recently stampeded to get the new Sony PlayStation. But according to maker Roche, production will have been expanded to a rate of 400 million treatment courses annually by the end of this year, a more than ten-fold increase since 2004. Currently there are only 10,000 treatments of Relenza available in pharmacy channels, says a company spokesman, "However, next year we will have approximately 20 million treatments available. The deliveries will begin in January 2007 and the majority of the initial shipments will be for the U.S. government pandemic stockpiling efforts."

Vaccines: Birds in the Bush and in the Hand

Although much of the $3.8 billion Congress allocated to fight pandemic H5N1 will be a complete waste, legislators wisely dedicated a billion of that to developing an entirely new way of making flu shots. (Although vaccine makers might have done the same with their own funds at the same pace.) This entails growing the vaccine in mammalian cell cultures rather than eggs. Six companies are now working on such vaccines using federal funds. Cell cultures can cut the usual nine-month period for making vaccine batches in chicken eggs to a mere 90 days. Although the current rabies vaccine has been grown from a cell culture since 1980 and two drug companies have cell-cultured H5N1 vaccines in clinical trials, such vaccines have not yet received FDA or E.U. approval.

In fact, no human H5N1 vaccine has yet received official approval, but companies are pumping them out anyway in the confidence that their drugs will be found both safe and effective. Switzerland has ordered enough vaccine from GlaxoSmithKline for one inoculation of each of its eight million citizens if a pandemic erupts. The U.S. government has ordered 2.7 million doses from three makers, which would be enough to vaccinate first responders so they could take care of those who did become ill. Eventually the country plans to stockpile 20 million doses and then presumably will increase that as well, but since the vaccines aren't yet available, even that amount is still academic.

A year ago, people and governments were flocking to get Tamiflu in the same way they've recently stampeded to get the new Sony PlayStation.

It's common to hear that stockpiling vaccines is futile since it's impossible to say what the effectiveness of a vaccine based on the virus presently in humans exposed to birds will be when it's altered to a point where it's going from human to human. But there was already evidence last year that such a mutation shouldn't be a problem. Scientists tested blood from people who had received an experimental vaccine against a 1997 strain of H5N1 and found it provoked a powerful cross-reaction from a strain that killed several Vietnamese in 2004.

Newer research by Dr. John Treanor and colleagues at the University of Rochester, presented on October 13 at a meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America supports these findings. Treanor's team studied people who'd been vaccinated against the Hong Kong strain of the H5N1 virus in 1998. Each was vaccinated again this year with a booster shot to fight the strain found in Vietnam. A second test group received only shots for the Vietnam strain in 2005. Those who received shots back in 1998 developed better protection than those with just the 2005 vaccination. Thus for all the talk about how rapidly H5N1 mutates, injections from 1998 were still protective. On the other hand, a seasonal human flu injection from 1998 would be worthless.

This is both evidence that H5N1 is not mutating like gangbusters and that we can quite possibly amass enough vaccine to protect every reachable person on the planet without having to build a new stockpile each year.

Hysteria over an avian flu pandemic has been very good for the Chicken Little media, authors, ambitious health officials, drug companies, and even Bush bashers. (An alarmist fantasy published by *Nature* magazine in May 2005 concluded by predicting a pandemic outbreak in December of last year, laying the blame entirely at the president's feet.) But even as many of the panic-mongers have begun to lie low, the vestiges of hysteria remain—as do the misallocations of billions of dollars from more serious health problems. Too bad no one ever holds the doomsayers accountable for the damage they've done. ♦

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Don't Cry for Pinochet

Chile succeeded despite him.

BY JOHN LONDREGAN

Pinochet in 1973

CORBIS / Horacio Villalobos

The death of Augusto Pinochet Ugarte marks the definitive end of his efforts to associate himself with conservatism. It also marks the ultimate success of his efforts to avoid accountability for his murderous behavior as a leader of the Chilean military junta that took power in 1973.

In September 1973, Chile was in the midst of a social crisis as the elected Socialist president Salvador Allende lost control over his own Popular Unity (UP) coalition, and violence erupted in the streets. There were certainly members of the UP who would have delighted in transforming Chile into a Marxist state along the lines of Castro's Cuba, but they were not at the point of being able to do so, and the elected political opposition to Allende had by no means exhausted its options in dealing with him. This did not prevent Pinochet from joining the unfolding coup plot. The violent succession of events on September 11, 1973, was highly one-sided; the military themselves were surprised by how little armed opposition they encountered as they seized power.

Despite Pinochet's initial declaration that he was the temporary leader of a temporary government, he managed to push aside the other heads of the armed forces, and to remain in power for the next 16 and a half years, longer than any other ruler, elected or otherwise, in the post-independence history of Chile. During the long years of military rule, Pinochet remorselessly sought control. He outlawed political parties and had opponents murdered. The butcher's bill for his time in power included the lives of over 3,000 of his fellow citizens (in a country of 15 million), not counting the many thousands more who were tortured by the government, and the thousands driven into exile. Pinochet sought to transform Chilean society, and he incorporated a series of free-market economic reforms as a part of his recipe for success.

His embrace of economic reform seems unlikely to have sprung from a commitment to freedom, given the overarching contempt for liberty that characterized the rest of his government. Rather, in order to insulate himself from the consequences of his murderous seizure of power, Pinochet sought out political allies, and his free market reforms helped him to garner support domestically on the right, and also among members of the international community. One must be careful not to fall into Pinochet's trap—accepting his brutal seizure of power and tyrannical rule as a natural accompaniment of free market reforms. Propagandists on the left lost no time in seeking to discredit economic freedom by associating it with Pinochet. To this day, we hear from Moscow that it takes a Pinochet to implement economic reforms successfully; Vladimir Putin seems all too willing to have Pinochet's uniform taken in a few sizes so he can try it on.

Pinochet and his apologists argue thus: "Castro and the far left are worse than Pinochet, they kill more people and deliver fewer benefits than did the military government of Chile." Are we to admire Pinochet because his murderous regime was more efficient than tyrants on the left at producing

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higher GDP? Without the torture, rape, and killing, would economic and political freedom have been impossible in Chile? Hardly! But this is the argument insinuated by Pinochet. He successfully appropriated the utilitarian fallacy to which many on the left fall prey: that murder and torture are acceptable if they hasten the advent of the utopia implied by one's ideological model. That fallacy probably killed more people during the 20th century than typhus, and it stands to do so again in this century if we do not inoculate ourselves against it.

Pinochet tied his advocacy of free markets about people's eyes like a blindfold, to keep them from seeing his firing squads. Nothing that was achieved during his years of tyranny justifies the crimes he committed. Nor is there any meaningful sense in which the policies adopted by the Pinochet government should be viewed as paradigmatic for economic freedom. The military government long pursued a badly misguided policy of overvaluing the local currency; during the debt crisis of the 1980s it took the outrageous step of converting private debts to foreigners into public debt. And then there was its corruption, details of which continue to gradually leak into public view. Indeed, there continues to be a need for economic reform and openness in Chile, where a "good old boy network" acts as a powerful check on economic and social mobility.

Pinochet got some of the answers to economic policy questions right, but for the wrong reasons. The ongoing debate about economic freedom in Chile and elsewhere is confused by the spurious association between freedom and the tyrant Pinochet. The Germans would have narrower roads, lower incomes, and an even worse collective memory if, after the Second World War, they had given the Nazis credit for building the Autobahns and marketing VWs. We should not make the mistake of giving Pinochet credit for the economic achievements of millions of hard-working and enterprising Chileans, nor for the policies that got out of their way. ♦

Worry About OPEC, Not China

If a stronger dollar is what you want.

BY **IRWIN M. STELZER**

Mission impossible. That's the best way to describe Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson's just-concluded trip to Beijing, ostensibly to persuade the Chinese to do something to whittle down their huge trade surplus with the United States. Paulson and his colleagues—the delegation included the commerce, labor, health and human services, and energy secretaries in addition to the U.S. trade representative, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board—don't have much of substance to show for their 13,000-mile round trip. Indeed, if their aim really was to pursue that oft-stated goal of U.S. policy, a "strong dollar," the delegation that the *Wall Street Journal* derisively labeled "the biggest economic expedition since Marco Polo's" should have been rerouted to Riyadh.

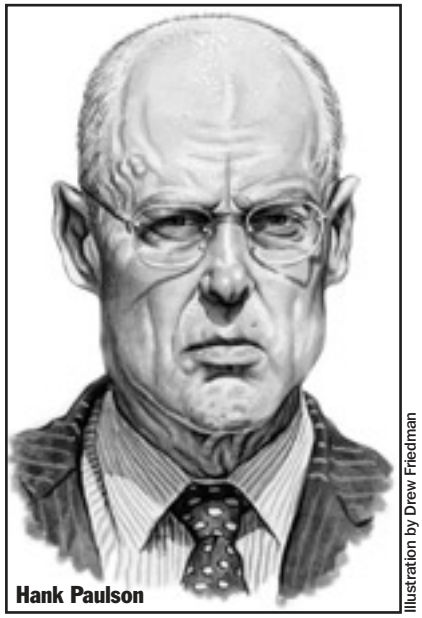
Hank Paulson

Illustration by Drew Friedman

While the Chinese have been accumulating dollars at the rate of about $200 billion per year, high oil prices have driven oil exporters' trade surplus with America to $500 billion annually. These oil producers, members or fellow travelers of the oil cartel that is keeping prices above competitive levels, are feeling put upon because the dollars they are getting for their oil now buy fewer pounds to spend in Harrods, and fewer euros to spend on the necessities of life in the south of France. Worse still, the dollars they have already accumulated are declining in value.

To protect against further declines, the oil producers are diversifying out of dollars and into other currencies, most prominently euros and Japanese yen. The central banks of the members of the OPEC cartel cut their dollar-holdings from 75 percent of total reserves in 2001, to 67 percent at the end of the first quarter of this year, and again to 65 percent at the end of the second quarter. That increased the downward pressure on the dollar, pressure that was alleviated a bit at week's end by two developments: It became clear that the American economy is sufficiently strong to make it unlikely that the Fed will soon cut interest rates, and it was announced that the trade deficit for October fell by over $5 billion.

The problem created for U.S. policy by the oil producers' dollar-holding is that many of these countries are outright hostile to America—Venezuela,

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Russia, Iran—and others might wreak havoc with the dollar should the Palestinian-Israeli crisis flare up, putting pressure on Arab regimes to inflict pain on the United States. The fact that any dollar-dumping would also harm the Arab states is irrelevant: The Middle East is not a region in which economically rational behavior consistently trumps self-inflicted wounding.

The problem with China is of a different sort. To the consternation of many politicians, its policy of pegging the yuan to the dollar undervalues the Chinese currency. This gives Chinese exporters a de facto subsidy, and makes made-in-the-USA goods, as well as those produced in Europe and Britain, more expensive in China. China has allowed the yuan to rise in value by almost 6 percent since mid-2005, but with no discernible effect on its huge trade surplus.

Paulson's mission is impossible for two reasons. First, the Chinese regime's overwhelming priority is to stay in power. That means providing jobs for the 300 million farmers expected to move to the cities in the next 20 years, which in turn means the government will under no circumstances allow the yuan to rise to a level that cuts sharply into exports.

Second, even if Paulson could persuade the Chinese to allow their currency to appreciate to a point where made-in-China merchandise became more expensive in America, the effect on the trade deficit would be trivial. American consumers would simply shift to goods manufactured in other countries in which labor costs are far lower than they are in the United States.

Still, Paulson's trip probably was worthwhile, although the exaggerated importance it took on as a consequence of the Bush administration's decision to bloat the delegation with cabinet members and to enhance its prestige by persuading Fed chairman Ben Bernanke to join the junket probably created expectations for success that were unattainable. My guess is that some bright blade in the White House thought it would appease the president's congressional critics if Bush sent a large delegation to prove he feels the pain of those who have lost jobs because of imports. Still, the 61-strong team of cabinet members-plus-aides was outnumbered by the 86 Chinese accompanying their lead negotiator, the tough, well-regarded vice premier, Wu Yi.

Paulson is clever enough to distinguish the practically attainable from a political wish list, which is why he put the word out that his trip was designed to open a two-year "Strategic Economic Dialogue" with China, not to produce a floating yuan. The Chinese are well aware that their mercantilist policy of accumulating foreign currency creates problems for them, and that their standard of living would be better if domestic demand grew so as to reduce their need to export. Wu Yi—after a diatribe about past grievances, starting with the opium wars (a traditional Chinese opening gambit beautifully described by Margaret MacMillan in her new book *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World*)—said that the regime is in the long run seeking a "rough balance" between imports and exports. But the Chinese authorities can't figure out how to get from here to there—how to achieve that goal without creating huge unemployment during the transition from an export-led to a more balanced economy.

Paulson hopes to change the conversation from a shouting match over the undervalued yuan to a "dialogue" ranging over joint interests in increasing world oil output, reducing the environmental degradation incident to China's inadequately green policies, improving labor standards in Chinese factories, protecting intellectual property rights, and opening markets to U.S. imports. Apparently unaware that previous "road maps" drawn up by the administration have not led anywhere, Commerce secretary Carlos Gutierrez called for still another "road map," this one to direct China to a more market-oriented economic model. If that's the destination China's rulers have in mind, Paulson is the man to help them find the way. Of course, they knew that before he and his entourage came calling last week on a mission designed more to quiet protectionist Democrats than to have a real impact on America's trade deficit. ♦

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HillaryCare Comes Back

The disastrous Democratic Medicare drug plan.

BY ROBERT M. GOLDBERG

Michael J. Fox made headlines for Democrats in the recent election campaign by promoting federal funding of embryonic stem cell research that the actor deems critical to finding a cure for Parkinson's Disease. Unbeknownst to him, his message was part of a massive bait-and-switch. That's because the Democrats also promised Medicare reforms that would have the effect of denying seniors access to new Parkinson drugs and of undermining investment in stem cell research—indeed, in all kinds of pharmaceutical research.

The Democrats' Medicare plan would allow the government to negotiate prices directly with drug companies. This, they argue, could cut prices enough for the government to pay for 100 percent of the prescription drug costs of every senior in America. The political appeal of this proposal is self-evident.

The Medicare legislation creating the prescription drug benefit that took effect in 2006 (known as Part D) prohibited the government from negotiating directly with drug or biotech companies in order to guard against price controls. Instead, pharmacy benefit managers—the same service organizations most health plans use—would negotiate drug prices, pay pharmacy claims, etc., while offering competing versions of the Part D benefit to seniors. Democrats and most policy experts predicted the new drug benefit would be confusing and unworkable, that seniors would fail to sign up, and that those who did would receive scant coverage as drug companies jacked up prices to cash in on sweetheart deals absent any government jawboning.

Liberal and conservative opponents of the Bush program both predicted that angry seniors by this fall would be headed to the polls outraged at the cost, complexity, and inadequacy of their new drug benefit. In fact, as the *Washington Post* reported (after the election), polls show 80 percent of those covered are satisfied with the plan. The plan covers 22.5 million people who previously had no prescription drug coverage. Another 9 million poor seniors have their entire drug costs covered, with fewer restrictions on choice than under the state or Medicaid programs on which they previously relied. Under the lash of competition, the cost of the program has been lower than expected—by a whopping $26 billion in 2006. Medicare officials believe the plan's average per-person subsidy will drop 15 percent next year to under $80 per month, even as the out-of-pocket costs of seniors continue to drop.

Unwilling to recognize the good news, Democrats have consistently pointed to the government-negotiated drug prices offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a model for what they would do with Medicare Part D. Ron Pollack, executive director of the liberal advocacy group Families USA (which supported a market-based approach to Medicare drug coverage when Democrats and President Clinton advanced it in 2000), has asserted, "Medicare is overwhelmingly the largest purchaser [of prescription drugs], and it's ridiculous for Medicare not to get the best deal of all institutional purchasers."

However, both the Congressional Budget Office and Medicare analysts estimate that the government could do no better than a private company in negotiating prices. So why do Democrats insist they can? Because they aren't proposing market-like negotiations but a combination of price controls and restrictions on what drugs seniors can use. In a word: HillaryCare.

Far from negotiating drug prices, the VA imposes them. Federal law requires companies to sell to the VA at 24 percent below wholesale price. If they won't, they are banned from selling medicines to Medicaid, Medicare, and the public health service. The VA demands even deeper discounts by creating a national formulary—a restrictive list of approved drugs for its patients. Companies that don't meet that additional discount don't make the list. Patients must get drugs from VA pharmacies instead of retail outlets. Patients who endure side effects from a formulary medicine—or who fail to respond to one—must submit themselves to an arduous and time-consuming bureaucratic process to gain access to any pharmaceuticals not on the list.

In opposing the Medicare Part D reform in 2003, Democratic senator Patty Murray stated that she "was unhappy at the prospect that this plan could tell patients with MS, Parkinson's disease, and ALS that they can't get the drugs they need because their plan will not cover them." Yet Azilect, the newest drug to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, approved in 2006, is not on the VA drug list, though every Medicare Part D plan has adopted it. In delaying access to new medicines, the VA is no different from the national health services of Canada and Great Britain. Tysabri, a new drug for multiple sclerosis, is available under every Medicare plan. It is not on the VA drug plan.

That doesn't seem to bother Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi. She is

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readying a proposal to force Medicare to ratchet down prices for every drug now and in the future using the VA approach. Yet as former Medicare director Mark McClellan points out, the Stark proposal will perversely encourage higher prices. "You set a top price for Medicare or the VA, or demand a deeper discount than the private sector, and watch the drug prices increase and discounts disappear. Demand cost-effectiveness studies, and the drugs will be offered to Medicare last while the case is made to the private sector first. That's one reason lots of drugs are available to Medicare patients now, but not to folks in the VA system."

Indeed, the VA price controls take a toll on the health of seniors who depend on the veterans' system for their care. Frank Lichtenberg, an economist at Columbia University's Graduate School of Business, found that the majority of the drugs on the VA formulary are more than eight years old—just 19 percent of prescription drugs approved since 2000 and 38 percent of those approved from 1990-2000 have made it onto the VA formulary. None of the drugs regarded as priority medicines since 2000 by the Food and Drug Administration are on it either. Lichtenberg estimates that "the use of older drugs in the VA system may have reduced life expectancy by 2.04 months" per person.

If making the lives of seniors shorter and sicker isn't bad enough, the Democrats' price control plan threatens to devastate pharmaceutical and biotechnology innovation just as the failed Clinton drug-pricing scheme of 1993 would have. Back then, a federal Breakthrough Drugs Committee was envisioned that would evaluate a drug's cost effectiveness. In response, venture capital investment in biotech dropped drastically and the market valuation of the biotech industry plunged 40 percent.

Today, drug companies have over 1,000 partnerships with biotech firms. So among the first victims of the Democratic drug price-control scheme would be investors in the research Michael J. Fox also supports. That includes Merck, which just invested over $1 billion in a company run by Nobel Prize winners that developed a technique to suppress tumor growth common to stem cell therapy, and Eli Lilly, which is investing in a company called Suven that focuses on Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, depression, vascular dementia, and Parkinson's disease.

Speculative biotech research will be unsustainable under Democratic price pressure. Genzyme, whose drugs are always a target of Democratic anti-pharmaceutical show trials, just bought the rights to a Parkinson's clinical trial program of Avigen. Celegene, which is likely to be bashed for the annual $61,000 price of Revlimid (a treatment for multiple myeloma and other cancers of the blood system), is investing heavily in a promising source of adult stem cells that have been used to replace dopamine neurons in people with Parkinson's. It is hard to imagine how such research could be sustained in a system that would cut drug companies' revenues and sales in half.

So far, Republicans have been largely silent about the success of the new Medicare drug benefit, or about the harm likely to be caused by the Democratic proposals to dismantle it. One exception is Rep. Mike Ferguson, the New Jersey Republican serving on the House Energy and Commerce committee. Ferguson recently lost his mother to multiple myeloma, but not before Celegene's Revlimid allowed her three more years of life. For him, the issue is passionately personal: "Price controls of any sort not only hurt seniors," he says. "They hurt our children and grandchildren who suffer with Parkinson's, cancer and juvenile diabetes."

Some prudent Democrats have begun to hedge their bets. Incoming House Way and Means chairman Charles Rangel appears more interested in working with drug companies to expand their existing patient assistance programs, which help subsidize needy patients. Incoming Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus, who supported the Medicare drug benefit, has agreed to hold hearings on government price negotiations but is cool to the idea.

For all the talk about the supposed virtues of the VA price controls, nearly 2 million VA beneficiaries have signed up for Medicare Part D. That's because the new plans give them access to medicines they can't get under the VA. Congressional Democrats should take note. ♦

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The New Great Game

Why the Bush administration has embraced India

By Daniel Twining

New Delhi

Three recent events illuminate the contours and fault lines of Asia's emerging strategic landscape, amid the lengthening shadows cast by China's growing power.

First, the United States and India consolidated a wide-ranging military, economic, and diplomatic partnership on December 9, when Congress passed legislation enabling U.S.-Indian civilian nuclear cooperation. Then, at a summit in Tokyo on December 15, the leaders of India and Japan declared their ambition for a strategic and economic entente between Asia's leading democracies. This stands in sharp contrast to the intensifying rivalry between India and China: Tensions over territory and Tibet simmered at a summit on November 21, where Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's assertion that "there is enough [geopolitical] space for the two countries to develop together" sounded more like hope than conviction.

As its relationships with the United States, Japan, and China show, India has reemerged as a geopolitical swing state after decades of marginalization as a consequence of the Cold War, its own crippling underdevelopment, and regional conflict in South Asia. Although its status as a heavyweight in the globalized world of the 21st century is new, India's identity as a great power is not: It was for centuries one of the world's largest economies and, under British rule, a preeminent power in Asia. Today, a rising India flush with self-confidence from its growing prosperity is determined not to be left behind by China's economic and military ascent. "The [Indian] elephant," says an admiring Japanese official, "is about to gallop."

The United States has an enormous stake in the success of a rich, confident, democratic India that shares American ambitions to manage Chinese power, protect Indian Ocean sea lanes, safeguard an open international economy, stabilize a volatile region encompassing the heartland of jihadist extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and prove to all those enamored of the Chinese model of authoritarian development that democracy is the firmest foundation for the achievement of humankind's most basic aspirations.

India is the world's biggest democracy, a nuclear power with the world's largest volunteer armed forces, and the world's second-fastest-growing major economy. Few countries will be more important to American security interests and American prosperity in the coming decades, as five centuries of Western management of the international system give way to a new economic and security order centered in the rimlands of the Indian and Pacific oceans.

India has been a factor in the global balance of power since at least 1510, when the establishment of a Portuguese trading colony at Goa broke a seven-century monopoly on the Indian Ocean spice trade by Muslim empires, unlocking the wealth of the East to European maritime states, which used it to build global empires. Possession of India propelled Britain to the peak of world power in the 19th century. "[T]he master of India," argued Britain's Lord Curzon, "must, under modern conditions, be the greatest power in the Asiatic Continent, and therefore . . . in the world."

During World War II, an Indian army under British command halted the Japanese army's relentless march across Asia, inflicting on Imperial Japan its first military defeat. India's location as an Indian Ocean and Himalayan power, its massive production of armaments, and its armed forces—which fought in Europe, North Africa,

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and Southeast Asia—contributed decisively to the Allied victory over the Axis powers.

Lord Curzon celebrated India's importance in *The Place of India in the Empire* (1909):

> The central position of India, its magnificent resources, its teeming multitude of men, its great trading harbors, its reserve of military strength, supplying an army always in a high state of efficiency and capable of being hurled at a moment's notice upon any point either of Asia or Africa—all these are assets of precious value. On the West, India must exercise a predominant influence over the destinies of Persia and Afghanistan; on the north, it can veto any rival in Tibet; on the north-east . . . it can exert great pressure upon China, and it is one of the guardians of the autonomous existence of Siam.

Possession of India gave the British Empire its global reach. Britain lost its status as a world power when it lost India.

Independent India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, shared Curzon's expansive vision, declaring India "the pivot round which the defense problems of the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia revolve." Wary Chinese strategists perceive a continuity of strategic design from Curzon to the Congress party today, accusing Nehru at that time of harboring ambitions for a "greater Indian empire," and more recently criticizing India's aspirations for "global military power."

"China and India," writes the Carnegie Endowment's Ashley Tellis, "appeared destined for competition almost from the moment of their creation as modern states."

The taproots of modern Sino-Indian conflict, argues historian John Garver, are found in the overlapping claims of traditional Indian and Chinese spheres of influence in Asia, and in "conflicting nationalist narratives that lead patriots of the two sides to look to the same arenas in attempting to realize their nations' modern greatness." These conflicts create acute security dilemmas as India and China compete for influence across Central, South, and Southeast Asia, where strategic gains by one power magnify the vulnerabilities of the other.

Indian officials perceive a Chinese design to box India into its subregion, curbing India's ability to project power beyond its borders. China's 1950 invasion of Tibet, traditionally the buffer between China and British India, established the trend. Beijing maintains pressure on New Delhi by politely declining to resolve their 2,500-mile border dispute, a legacy of the 1962 Sino-Indian war. China has deployed nuclear weapons along its disputed border with India in Tibet. "The potential political and psychological impact" of nuclear-armed missiles "literally a few miles from India's border . . . cannot be underestimated," argues political scientist Amitabh Mattoo. China has refused to extend its nuclear "no first use" doctrine to include India.

China's military assistance to Pakistan, including the extensive transfer of nuclear and missile components, inflates the power of a state with which India has fought three wars, enabling Pakistan to challenge Indian primacy in South Asia. Since the 1990s, China has pursued a consistent policy of encircling India by supplying military assistance and training to its neighbors. The top three recipients of Chinese arms exports are Pakistan, Burma, and Bangladesh; China has also established military supply and exchange relationships with Nepal and Sri Lanka. China seeks to create "a string of anti-Indian influence around India" that is "designed to marginalize India in the long term," according to one Indian strategist. Prime Minister Singh laments "the desire of extra-regional powers to keep us engaged in low-intensity conflicts and local problems, to weigh us down in a low-level equilibrium."

China is also expending money and manpower to construct strategic road and rail links in India's backyard. A high-altitude rail line linking Qinghai in China with Lhasa in Tibet, which began transporting Chinese military personnel in early December, reportedly features a planned southern spur leading to the disputed Sino-Indian border, enabling the rapid movement of Chinese military forces in the event of conflict. Beijing and Islamabad are conducting surveys for a rail line across the Karakoram mountains linking western China to northern Pakistan, which would tie up with Chinese-funded roads and railways leading to Pakistani ports on the Arabian Sea. China is reported to be considering construction of a rail link to Nepal, traditionally a buffer state under India's influence.

China has reportedly constructed 39 transport routes from its interior to its contested border with India—which Indian planners perceive as more of a military threat than a commercial opportunity, since much of the border is closed to trade. China's program of road and rail works along its border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as Chinese territory, has led New Delhi to accelerate "strategically important" road construction in the region. China is also funding extensive road and rail projects in Burma, traditionally the land corridor for both commerce and armies between East and South Asia.

Around India, China is constructing deep-water port facilities capable of berthing warships at Gwadar in Pakistan, on the Arabian Sea; at Rangoon, Kyaukpyu, and other harbors in Burma; at Chittagong in Bangladesh;

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and at Sihanoukville in Cambodia. Chinese engineers are dredging Burma's Irrawaddy River, which will give China a usable waterway connecting Yunnan province to the Bay of Bengal. China operates naval and radar facilities on Burma's Coco Islands, just 30 miles from Indian territory and strategically situated near the Straits of Malacca, through which pass half of all world oil shipments and one-third of all ship-borne cargo. India recently used its influence with the government of the Maldives to veto a Chinese request for naval access rights just off India's south coast.

The Pentagon has highlighted Beijing's design to construct a "string of pearls" of naval facilities stretching from Southeast Asia to the Persian Gulf—a project that will help China protect seaborne trade and, potentially, contain the Indian Navy's projection of power in what it considers its home seas. China's construction of transport infrastructure and port facilities that encircle India, says analyst Vikram Sood, is "designed to put India in pincers."

India is encircled by failed and potentially failing states—including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Amidst the drama of Washington's opening to Beijing in 1971, Henry Kissinger told President Nixon that no country in the world, with the possible exception of Great Britain, shared a greater convergence of strategic interests with America than Mao's China. Modern India's democratic identity, and a striking congruence of interests between Washington and New Delhi after the Cold War, give India the stronger claim to be America's "natural ally" in Asia.

As Prime Minister Singh has said, "If there is an 'idea of India' that the world should remember us by and regard us for, it is the idea of an inclusive and open society, a multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual society. All countries of the world will evolve in this direction as we move forward into the 21st century. Liberal democracy is the natural order of social and political organization in today's world. All alternate systems, authoritarian and majoritarian in varying degrees, are an aberration."

Former ambassador to India Robert Blackwill argues convincingly that New Delhi may more closely share America's core foreign policy goals and perception of threat than any of our traditional allies. More people have been killed by terrorists in India over the past 15 years than in any other country. This makes India a natural partner to America in the campaign against terror, centered in the Pakistan-Afghanistan nexus in India's backyard. Facing an acute missile threat from China and Pakistan, India embraced President Bush's missile defense plans when, in 2001, the president dismayed many traditional allies by withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. India was among the first countries to offer America the use of its military facilities after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

India is encircled by failed and potentially failing states—including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. New Delhi shares Washington's interest in helping these countries develop durable democratic institutions. "India would like the whole of South Asia to emerge as a community of flourishing democracies," said Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran in 2005.

America is India's largest trading partner. Continued annual economic growth of 8-9 percent depends on partnership with the world's largest economic power in trade, investment, technology, and market access. India's dependence on imported energy—and its intense competition with China for control of oil and gas supplies, from Ecuador to Angola—gives it an abiding interest in energy cooperation with America and Japan, including protecting the sea lanes linking the Persian Gulf to Asian waters.

India is committed to balancing Chinese power in Asia. "India has never waited for American permission to balance China," says Indian strategist Raja Mohan. "I tell the Americans: You balanced China from 1949 to 1971, but then allied with Beijing from 1971 to 1989. India has been balancing China since the day the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1950. We have always balanced China—and that's what we'll continue to do." India, Mohan insists, "will never play second fiddle to the Chinese."

The challenge posed to India's security and its identity as a democratic Asian power by the rise of authoritarian China is fueling the new warmth in India's relations with Washington and Tokyo.

"[T]here is a major realignment of forces taking place in Asia," explained India's foreign secretary in 2005. "There is the emergence of China as a global economic powerhouse. There will be increased capabilities that China will be able to bring to bear in this region and even beyond. India also is going to be a major player in Asia. . . . I think India and the United States can contribute to a much better balance in the Asian region."

India, according to *Indian Express* editor in chief

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Shekhar Gupta, faces a strategic choice between building economic and military power in partnership with America and playing underdog to China in a global anti-American axis. "Is it a good or bad thing for India that the Cold War is over and that, in a resultant unipolar world, it has a mutually beneficial relationship with the only superpower?" he asks. The alternative is for India "to be to tomorrow's China what Cuba was to yesterday's Soviet Union. . . . [G]o seek a referendum from the people of India on that."

Although Chinese military strategists worry less about India than about America and Japan, the prospect of an enduring Indo-U.S. military partnership attracts Beijing's full attention. Indian strategist Brahma Chellaney recounts, "On my visits to China, I have found as an Indian that the only time the Chinese sit up and listen is when the U.S.-India relationship comes up. India and the United States ganging up militarily is China's worst nightmare."

So, too, could be an emerging strategic entente between India and Japan. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe has said, "It is of crucial importance to Japan's national interest that we further strengthen our ties with India," which he calls "the most important bilateral relationship in the world."

Since assuming office in September, Abe has enthusiastically backed the concept of a quadrilateral security partnership among Japan, India, Australia, and the United States. Abe says the values of "freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" are central to Japan's identity as an Asian great power. "I believe Japan should play a role in trying to spread such values, for example in the Asian region," he recently told the *Washington Post*'s Fred Hiatt. This makes democratic India a natural strategic partner.

Indian officials are enthusiastic about what Abe calls the development of a "new Asian order" based on strategic cooperation among Asian democracies. As Japan's ambassador in New Delhi, Yasukuni Enoki, recently put it, an Indo-Japanese strategic partnership could become "the driving force behind an emerging Asia," creating what Prime Minister Singh calls "an arc of advantage and prosperity" that will "enhance peace and stability in the Asian region and beyond."

Japan is expected to join India and the United States next year in high-profile naval exercises in the South China Sea. The two countries are pursuing a comprehensive economic partnership that includes Japanese provision of advanced technology to India to accelerate its rise. "India is the key counterweight to China in Asia, along with Vietnam," says one senior Japanese official. According to India's Mohan, "You'll see the India-Japan relationship change more over the next few years than any of our other key relationships. India-Japan is the next big game."

Such cooperation between a rising India and a more muscular Japan raises the prospect of what Chellaney, in his *Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India, and Japan*, calls the emergence of an Asian "constellation of democracies" dedicated to preserving what the State Department's Nicholas Burns calls "a stable balance of power in all of the Asia-Pacific region—one that favors peace through the presence of strong democratic nations enjoying friendly relations with the United States."

To foster an Asian balance that safeguards its liberal principles, India will need to wield the appeal of its democratic values as a strategic asset. India played a key role in brokering Nepal's recent agreement to hold democratic elections, but it continues to appease Burma's military junta in ways that alienate its natural allies, the Burmese people. They voted overwhelmingly for the democratic, pro-Indian opposition in the country's last free elections.

"India's regional grand strategy must be based on our belief that what is good for us is also good for our neighbors; in other words, pluralistic political systems, the rule of law, the rights of the individual," argues *Hindustan Times* columnist Manoj Joshi. From Rawalpindi to Rangoon, Indian leaders will find that democrats make better neighbors than military dictators.

India's quest for strategic autonomy and its identity as a great civilization mean that it will never be the kind of subordinate ally the United States cultivated during the Cold War. The closest historical model for America's ambition to accelerate India's rise to world power may be France's decision to invest in Russia's economic and military modernization in the late 19th century. France's goal was to build Russia up as an equal partner to help manage the rise of German power in Europe—just as the United States today hopes to construct friendly centers of power in Asia to limit China's ultimate ambitions.

"We're fully willing and ready to assist in th[e] growth of India's global power, . . . which we see as largely positive," says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Turning the caricature of ally-bashing unilateralism on its head, in India, the Bush administration is working concertedly, writes journalist Edward Luce, "to play midwife to the birth of a new great power."

Now the enactment in Washington of legislation enabling Indo-American civilian nuclear cooperation is a compelling riposte to leaders on the left and right of Indian politics who remain skeptical of Secretary Rice's commitment that America will be "a reliable partner for India as it makes its move as a global power." Sena-

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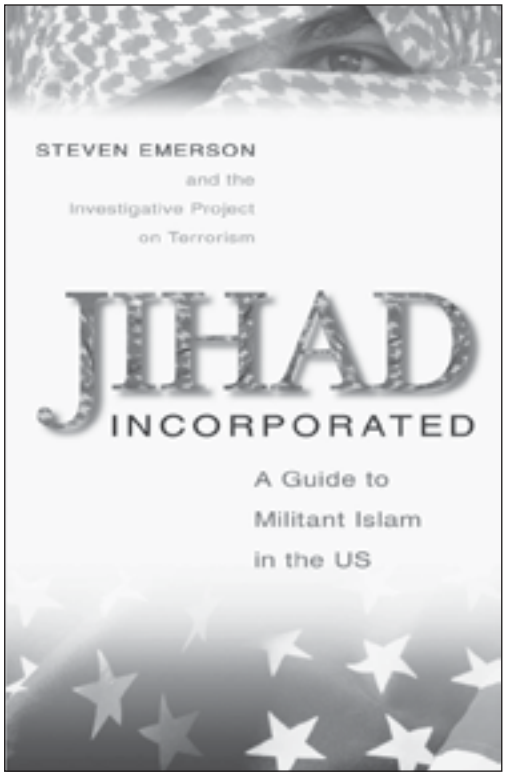
tor Richard Lugar calls the agreement "the most important strategic diplomatic initiative undertaken by President Bush." India's "normalization" as a nuclear power through agreements with the United States, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the International Atomic Energy Agency will encourage it to remain a responsible nuclear state committed to upholding a global nuclear order from which it had previously been excluded.

Civilian nuclear cooperation with Washington gives India even greater incentives to maintain India's "impeccable" (Prime Minister Singh) and "excellent" (Secretary Rice) nonproliferation record. It should also encourage Indian cooperation containing Iran's nuclear weapons program: In February, India voted with the United States to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions.

The notion of a Sino-American partnership to contain India's rise as a nuclear power, as suggested by President Clinton's joint condemnation of India's nuclear tests with Chinese president Jiang Zemin in Beijing in 1998—and more recently by American critics of the U.S.-India nuclear deal—rankles Indian elites. They are confused by the determination of U.S. critics to hold India to a far higher proliferation standard than China has displayed in its transfer of nuclear technology to Pakistan. They are surprised that some American experts believe excluding India from the legitimate nuclear order is more faithful to the cause of nonproliferation than enmeshing India in the rules of the nuclear club. And they are baffled that the West would want to entrench a balance of terror between democratic India and authoritarian China that permanently favors the latter.

Economic dynamism is fueling India's geopolitical ambitions. This new vigor is somewhat mystifying when judged against the bureaucratic incompetence of the Indian state. Despite scandalous underinvestment in education, sanitation, health, and infrastructure, India's economy is growing at an annual rate of 8-9 percent and is forecast to surpass China as the world's fastest-growing major economy next year. India remains burdened by acute poverty, yet possesses an expanding middle class already larger than the entire population of the United States. It suffers from stifling and corrupt government, yet boasts world-beating companies with global reach. Its dizzying politics—which currently pit a profoundly reformist prime minister against old-fashioned Marxists and caste-based populists within his own



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governing coalition—do not lend themselves to the kind of strategic economic liberalization China's leaders have managed since 1978.

"To race China, first let's get our feet off the brakes," implores the former editor of the reformist *Indian Express*, Arun Shourie. If and when this happens, Indian power, prosperity, and culture could change the world.

India's rapidly expanding middle class is expected to constitute 60 percent of its billion-plus population by 2020. India is expected to surpass Japan in the 2020s as the world's third-largest economy at market exchange rates, and to surpass China around 2032 as the world's most populous country. India's relative youthfulness should produce a "demographic dividend": While its 400 million-strong labor force today is only half that of China, by 2025 those figures will reverse as China's population rapidly ages.

India's economic growth may be more sustainable than China's. Domestic consumption accounts for nearly two-thirds of India's GDP but only 42 percent of China's, making India's growth "better balanced" than that of China's export-dependent economy, according to Morgan Stanley's Stephen Roach. India's combination of private-sector dynamism and state incompetence means that "India is rising despite the state," in the words of economist Gurcharan Das. It is "an organic success from below" rather than one directed by government planners, and is therefore "more likely to endure."

The United States is strangely popular in India. Polling regularly shows Indians to be among the most pro-American people anywhere—sometimes registering warmer sentiments towards the United States than Americans themselves do.

Conventional wisdom that Indian democracy constrains economic growth, and is inferior to the ruthless efficiency of China's authoritarian development model, is wrong. India's curse—like China's until quite recently—has been an overweening state that squeezes out private investment and creates massive opportunities for corruption. "India's problem isn't too much democracy, it's too much socialism," says Prannoy Roy, the founder of India's NDTV.

This is rapidly changing as economic reform transforms India's economic landscape, fueling a vast domestic consumer market and providing a launching pad for Indian companies like Infosys, recently listed on the NASDAQ-100. More fundamentally, its democratic political foundation gives India a long-term comparative advantage by rendering less likely the kind of revolutionary unrest that has regularly knocked China's growth off course throughout that country's long history.

Infused with the missionary spirit and the ideology of the Open Door, Americans have long held a fascination with the prospect of changing China in our own image. Yet authoritarian China's rise and growing nationalism raise questions about when and whether China will embrace political liberalism.

India may be a better template against which to judge the appeal of democratic values on Asian soil—and a surer partner in managing security challenges, from Chinese power to global terrorism, whose threat lies in their lack of democratic control. A durable Indo-American partnership of values promises higher dividends than a century of failed attempts to forge an enduring Sino-American alliance in Asia.

The United States is strangely popular in India. Polling regularly shows Indians to be among the most pro-American people anywhere—sometimes registering warmer sentiments towards the United States than Americans themselves do. But this is not so strange: India and America are the world's biggest and oldest democracies. Both are multiethnic, continental empires with strong cultural-religious identities. Each inherited the rule of law from Britain. Indian and American foreign policies appear equally animated by a self-regarding exceptionalism and a habit of moralizing in international affairs.

Both India and America are revisionist powers intent on peacefully recasting the contemporary international order and ensuring themselves a prominent place in it. America's rise to world power in the 19th and 20th centuries is, in some respects, a model for India's own ambitions. As Indian analyst Pratap Bhanu Mehta told the *New York Times*, Indians have "great admiration for U.S. power" and want their country to "replicate" it, not oppose it. How many of America's European allies share such sentiments?

The CIA has labeled India the key "swing state" in international politics. It predicts that India will emerge by 2015 as the fourth most important power in the international system. Goldman Sachs predicts that, by 2040, the largest economies on earth will be China, the United States, India, and Japan. A strategic partnership of values among the last three, naturally encompassing the European Union, may defy predictions of a coming "Chinese century"—and set a standard of democratic cooperation and prosperity China itself might ultimately embrace on its own path to greatness. ♦

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Meet Mugabe's Victims

Thousands have been killed or tortured by the Zimbabwean dictator. Here are the stories of three.

By James Kirchick

Harare and Johannesburg

For 17 years, Holly Moyo was one of the many loyal foot soldiers who helped keep the government of Robert Mugabe running. Like his father before him, he served in the Zimbabwean Republic Police, in the southern city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest. He was assigned to the corps that handles crowd control at large protests. Over the past few years especially, as political turmoil increased in this once prosperous southern African nation, his was a busy job.

Holly Moyo

Photos by Sebastian Rich

Like most black Zimbabweans, the 42-year-old husband and father once was a supporter of Robert Mugabe. "I still remember when he was in jail," Moyo says, citing the ten-year period that began in 1964. Mugabe became a Mandela-like figure for the country's black majority, and in 1980 was elected president in the country's first democratic vote. Zimbabwe soon posted high literacy and economic growth. But by the time of the 2002 presidential election, Moyo wanted change. "Our economy was going to the dogs," he said. And things have only gotten worse since. The country is now crippled by 80 percent unemployment, astronomical inflation rates, and massive shortages of food.

Many wonder why Zimbabwe has not experienced an armed revolt under Mugabe. One hears the complaint, especially among blacks in the region, that Zimbabwean blacks are too docile, too kind, too respectful of authority for their own good. "The people are resigned," a Zimbabwean journalist told me. But there are other reasons a coup—at least a coup emanating from the military or security forces—is unlikely. One is the lingering awe for Mugabe as liberation leader that some still no doubt feel. The most acute reason, however, is that any dissent within the security forces, even from low-ranking officers, is met with a strong show of force.

Consider Holly Moyo's experience. In the run-up to the March 2002 election, Moyo says, officers from the Police Internal Security Intelligence (PISI) infiltrated the police so as "to find out who was against Mugabe." As every major election-observer group (except, notably, African ones) would confirm, "Mugabe incorporated the police into his own instruments" for stealing the election.

So when the election finally rolled around, Moyo decided to take a risk and call in sick. Police officers vote at their workplaces, under the careful eye of their superiors, not at neutral locations like town halls or civic centers.

James Kirchick is an assistant to the editor in chief of the New Republic.

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Moyo says he and his colleagues were told by their boss, "You put your 'X' on ZANU-PF," the ruling party. "They said our salary is being paid for by Mugabe," Moyo recalls. "But it is being paid for by the common people." Moyo figured that his secret ballot was the only weapon he had to use against the dictatorship. To him, the risk was worth it.

Moyo's ploy failed. A plainclothes police spy saw him at a public polling place on Election Day and reported him immediately to his supervisors. "We know whom you voted for," Moyo was told. The police spy even described what Moyo had been wearing.

"My vote is my secret," Moyo responded. He was told, "The only secrets belong to ZANU-PF," and handed a resignation form, which he refused to sign. In a country with such a weak economy, his job was his only means of caring for his wife and children.

When he got home that day, he found PISI officers searching his house. They beat him, and his parents told him to "leave because you are going to die."

But Moyo chose to stay, even to become more forthright in his politics. He began taking the *Daily News*, an independent newspaper, to work, in order to share it covertly with like-minded officers. The *Daily News* had suffered firebomb attacks on its Harare office; it would eventually be shut down.

Moyo was a dutiful employee of the police force, but he took seriously his public servant's pledge to uphold the rule of law. In late 2003, in spite of the certain political repercussions, he oversaw the arrest of 37 ZANU-PF supporters for rioting. This was the last straw. He and others were accused of being "British spies and stooges." He was forced to sign resignation papers, was dismissed from the force in February 2004 with a pittance for severance pay, and his house was put under 24-hour surveillance by the security forces.

But it was only in October that year that things spiraled out of control. "They came to me during the night," Moyo recalled, familiar words to many a Zimbabwean. At around 11 P.M., when he was on his way home from town, six or seven men emerged from a Land Rover and began to beat him. "They said I was going to die for Tsvangirai," he said, Morgan Tsvangirai being the leader of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. The men took a knife to his genitals, and Moyo soon passed out.

His wife found him. "My wife screamed, she screamed. There was blood everywhere." Parts of his mutilated penis were on his knee. Neighbors took him to the hospital where administrators gave him a bed but denied him treatment, other than painkillers, for four days. Thanks to sympathetic nurses who took him into their care, the damage was not as bad as it could have been, but his testicles were "cut into pieces" and the scars of his skinned penis

Dean du Plessis

will never go away. His wife was jailed for eight days for making a report to the police.

After a week, he was discharged. Unable to obtain painkillers once he left the hospital, he started drinking heavily to dull the pain. He keeps photos of his wounds—"in case we want to go to court one day."

Moyo believed it was only a matter of time before the government returned to finish the job. He felt he had no choice but to leave Zimbabwe. He sent his children to his parents' home, and on December 30, 2004, friends helped push him through his bathroom window at 3 in the morning so that the men watching his house would not see him

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escape. He and his wife now live in South Africa, in a tiny, one-room house—apartheid-era servant's quarters in the backyard of a luxury home—in a tony northern suburb of Johannesburg. He hasn't seen his children for almost two years. He was lucky to receive political asylum. A Zimbabwean exile organization helped cover the costs of reconstructive surgery.

As he tells me this, and shows me a photo of his younger self as a proud police officer in uniform, Moyo is in tears. "Things are going to be okay in Zimbabwe one day," he tells me. "We are going to go back home."

Dean du Plessis is one of the few white people left in Zimbabwe. He is 29 years old and blind. Most impressive about this remarkable man who displays more *joie de vivre* than most people who can see is that he has made a name for himself as a cricket commentator on the radio. He broadcasts daily from 5 to 6 P.M. on the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and has also done commentary for the BBC. He thinks he is the first blind sportscaster in the world. For most of his schooling, he attended the Pioneer School for the Blind, in South Africa. Aside from his disability, he is a regular guy. "I like girls, good beer, and loud music," he tells me when I meet him at a favorite bar.

But he too has been a victim of the Mugabe regime, and his story shows how depraved it has become.

To understand what happened to Dean du Plessis, one must first understand something about Zimbabwean cricket. The national cricket team, like nearly every other facet of Zimbabwean life, has been forcibly politicized in recent years. It used to be one of the best cricket teams, if not the best, in the world. But at around the same time Mugabe began authorizing violent seizures of white-owned farms, he packed the Zimbabwe Cricket Union with ZANU-PF hacks. In April 2004, Heath Streak, one of the country's best cricketers and the national team's captain, was forced to resign over disputes related to racial quotas that led to the firing of many white players. Over the past several years, black and white players alike have quit as a result of political differences with those in charge. In a December 2005 broadcast, du Plessis stated the obvious about the condition of Zimbabwean cricket. "I criticized the people that run Zimbabwe cricket," he told me matter-of-factly. "They don't know anything about the sport."

The day after his broadcast, two men came to the Harare Toyota dealership where du Plessis works as a customer service representative. They told him to come with them. Although du Plessis could not see them, he knew what they had in mind. Still, du Plessis did not make a

Givemore Chari

scene. "I didn't want to cause any attention," he says. "I didn't want anyone else to get involved; it's not fair on them."

The two men drove him for about a half hour, took him to an air-conditioned room, and sat him in what he describes as a "comfortable chair." They then played a recording of the broadcast in question.

"Is that you?" one of the men asked.

"You can hear my voice," du Plessis responded. "Why are you asking me?"

Disappointed with his insubordination, the men twisted his feet and beat his soles with a fan belt for half an

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hour. This is a form of torture common in Mugabe's Zimbabwe, and human rights NGOs have reported its being perpetrated against many individuals. Known as "falanga," it is used in other locales and is popular with dictatorships because it leaves few visible signs as the soles of the feet are thick and tough.

Up until our interview, du Plessis had not spoken of this torment.

Like many Zimbabweans, he too has fond memories of Mugabe's early years. He met the president in 1982, when Mugabe and his widely admired first wife, Sally, visited du Plessis's school. The president rubbed his head. "In those years I was very scared of the sirens," he explains, speaking of the president's ubiquitous motorcade. In a foreshadowing of his future outspokenness, du Plessis piped up as the First Family made their way to their car, "Please, Mr. Mugabe, I've got a terrible headache. Please don't put on the sirens." The motorcade left quietly, "like sedate human beings," du Plessis recalls. "Years ago Mugabe never used to be like this," he says, shaking his head. "In general, he was a very good man."

Du Plessis continues to broadcast, but he is careful about what he says. "I love my country. . . . Being away [at school] in South Africa I was deprived of growing up in the country I love so much."

Few American college students could readily identify with the difficulties endured by Givemore Chari, age 23. As a student at Bindura University of Science Education, in the ZANU-PF stronghold of Mashonaland Central Province, Chari helped to lead a democracy movement. Now he must do so in exile.

Zimbabwe's system of higher education, heavily dependent on state funds, has suffered greatly from the country's economic unraveling, which has predictably led to student unrest. Student-led protests at the increase of tuition fees and other, more grave political provocations are a common occurrence. At Bindura, the outspoken Chari was president of the Student Representatives' Council. In October 2005 he was suspended, not for academic infractions or hard partying, but for allegedly sowing "feelings of hate and dislike."

Given Zimbabwe's 13 universities and large student population, it is not difficult to see why the government considers students "a major threat within the composition of the democratic forces" in the country, Chari says. He himself feels an obligation to the ordinary Zimbabwean, whose taxes support higher education but who often cannot send his own children to college. "I am bound to be his voice when he is oppressed and is voiceless, I am bound to speak for him. I am bound to free that individual. Neglecting him when I am benefiting from the tax that is coming from his sweat is tantamount to betrayal."

In May of this year, Chari attended the annual conference of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) in Harare. One of President Mugabe's ubiquitous portraits was hanging in the conference room. "His staying in power [after the rigged 2002 election] was illegitimate as far as we were concerned," Chari says. "The idea of respecting him and having his picture in our conference room was like legitimizing" his election-stealing. So the students carefully removed the presidential portrait and turned it over to the police officers standing watch. Forty-eight students including Chari were arrested at the end of the three-day conference on trumped-up charges.

In prison, he and the others were "brutally assaulted" by guards and denied access to any sort of medical treatment or food until the next day—and then only after human rights lawyers intervened. Three days later, when Chari arrived back at school, he was promptly rearrested, detained, and beaten again. When released, he returned to join mass protests at his school. "We decided to continue with the demonstrations until our fellow comrades were released," he told me.

It was at this time that he was "forcibly abducted" by intelligence officers. He was thrown into a brown Toyota pickup where drunken thugs beat and spit on him, threatening to kill him. He says he lost consciousness for about 30 minutes yet somehow managed to escape just as someone threw a glass bottle at him, scarring his face. He made his way to South Africa in late May and was staying in Johannesburg when I met him in mid-August.

The chances of Chari's returning to Zimbabwe anytime soon are slim. He told me he was planning on leaving for another African country (which he could not disclose) out of fear for his safety. Zimbabwean agents have been known to infiltrate the exile community (estimated at between 1.5 and 3 million people) in South Africa. "This regime can do anything," he says.

The people of Zimbabwe could tell countless stories like these three. What's more, men like the three I met—nonviolent political dissenters subjected to torture—were lucky: They were not killed. With international news coverage heavily slanted toward the Middle East and what little space is given to Africa focused on the continuing genocide in Sudan, the crisis of Zimbabwe has been all but ignored. Yet we should not forget about Robert Mugabe. As Holly Moyo says, "He's murdered so many people. His hands are so full of blood." ♦

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'The Night Watch' (1642)

Archivo Iconografico S. A. / Corbis

Looking at Rembrandt

A portrait of the Dutch Master at 400

BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

Nothing else pumps up the municipal pride of once-glorious cities, now moribund, like the pertinent anniversaries of their artistic native sons long dead.

Amsterdam may have capitulated to the whoremongers, real and metaphorical, years ago, but the 400th anniversary of Rembrandt's birth evokes the Dutch Golden Age, when piety and prosperity honored each other, and when artistic excellence served them both. This year, at several removes from gold, Amsterdam department store façades sported outsized Rembrandt reproductions; Rembrandt Square featured a *Night Watch* consisting of 22 life-size bronze figures, in the midst of which the admirer can stand and be photographed; and *Rembrandt the Musical* regaled the theatergoer with the dirt on "'the master of light' whose life had very shady sides to it," in the words of the publicity agent's all-too-resistible come-on.

It is hard to blame the Dutch for trading on a homegrown brand name that everyone else has been cashing in on for ages. Alongside Leonardo and Michelangelo, Rembrandt is one of the three most famous artists ever, with whom the public is on a first-name basis; and the name Rembrandt has lent the cachet of greatness and the grace of familiarity to sell everything from kitchen countertops to whitening toothpaste to fancy hotels in Bangkok and Knightsbridge. No work of Rembrandt's has attained the iconic status of the *David* or the *Mona Lisa*; yet Rembrandt seems to rank with the greatest of the great. The 400th provides a fine occasion to consider why that should be so.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn's lineage was almost as honorably homespun as a 19th-century American president's: His father was a miller, his mother a baker's daughter. The ninth of ten children, with his shining intelligence, Rembrandt embodied his parents' hope for better things, and they sent him first to the Latin School in Leiden, then to Leiden University, the

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Dutch Oxford. Like many another born artist, Rembrandt soon realized the university route was not for him, and he signed on as apprentice to the painter Jacob van Swanenburgh, who went in for ever-popular (and lucrative) history and architectural painting, though his most famous work shows a fiendish set of jaws macerating sinners in the depths of hell.

Rembrandt never did paint any infernal landscapes, but his three-year stint with Swanenburgh served him well; his progress so heartened his father that he sent Rembrandt to Amsterdam for six months to learn what he could from the eminent Pieter Lastman. Upon his return to Leiden in 1625, Rembrandt established himself in a master's studio of his own, and took to cranking out history paintings—the Bible being his principal historical source, as in *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, *The Apostle Paul*, *Judas Returning the Pieces of Silver*—which were always in hot demand and which secured his early reputation. The impression he made on the connoisseur Constantijn Huygens, secretary to Stadholder Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange, gained him some choice princely commissions; and the prospect of incalculable triumph lured him to Amsterdam in 1632.

The capital city did not disappoint him, and there he certainly lived up to his own vision of himself. He continued with history painting, added portraiture—notably self-portraiture—and the occasional landscape to his repertoire, and taught many able students. Riches and high esteem were his reward, and Rembrandt evidently thought well enough of himself to take after Leonardo and Michelangelo in signing his works with his first name alone. He took after Peter Paul Rubens more directly, investing clinically precise realism with dashing brilliance.

Marriage to Saskia van Uylenburgh, the cousin of an art dealer who helped set him up in business, not only brought him personal happiness but provided him with a nonpareil artist's model. In perhaps their most famous collaboration, Rembrandt sits as well as paints: *Self-Portrait with Saskia on His Lap (The Prodigal Son in the Tavern)* presents him as a laughing, hard-drinking rascal, holding aloft a glass flute of ale long as a telescope. His wife is cast as that evening's pick-up, disdainfully peering over her shoulder at the viewer, who probably wishes he could order some of what the Prodigal is having. This spirited roistering in the Frans Hals manner defies homebound Dutch respectability, and in this strangely joyous image that seems to celebrate renegade sexuality within marriage, love declares that it lives strictly on its own terms, glowingly.

However, the glow would tragically fade, or rather become the hectic flush of tuberculosis on Saskia's cheeks: In 1642 she died at the age of 30, and was buried in the plain cloth shroud prescribed by Calvinist law. In 1639 Rembrandt had produced a prescient etching that showed a newly married couple paying their obeisance to Death: To the skeleton arising from the grave, the bride holds out a flower, an offering to tide Death over until He can claim her beauteous self. No sacrifice—not even the three infants who preceded Saskia to the grave—could propitiate the Reaper. He took what He wanted when He wanted it.

Work and love—or at any rate, work and sex—remained Rembrandt's way of holding off the darkness. Saskia was not long gone when her surviving son's nurse, Geertje Dircx, took her place in Rembrandt's bed. During the years of their affair, Rembrandt turned out sexual etchings so frank and coarse as hardly to be considered erotic: a faceless monk in a cornfield plowing some faceless woman whose clenched feet and straining legs are all one sees of her; a cavalier whose plumed headgear dangles from the bedpost servicing a lady who demonstrates no particular thrill at the privilege.

In 1649 the arrival in Rembrandt's household of a younger and much prettier servant, Hendrickje Stoffels, announced a new romantic dispensation, and Geertje was not pleased to be sent packing. No doubt this is the stuff that has *Rembrandt the Musical* salaciously wailing the blues: Geertje's charging Rembrandt with breach of promise and his publicly denying her claims that she was his mistress; the pregnant Hendrickje's being hounded before an ecclesiastical court and officially proclaimed Rembrandt's whore, while Rembrandt, who had left the Reformed Church, skates by without reprimand; Rembrandt's getting his own back against Geertje and then some, by contriving to have her declared mentally incompetent and confined to a virtual dungeon for five years.

The sexual scandal was topped off by financial ruin as dissatisfied customers for grand commissions, and the artist's own insatiable taste for the finer things in life, plunged Rembrandt into bankruptcy. When death came at last, in 1669, it may not have seemed entirely unwelcome.

Few lives have known the tempestuous ethical and emotional amplitude of Rembrandt's, and in his work one sees the sun-graced uplands and the pits of degradation, sometimes at once. His *Bathsheba* (1654), for which Hendrickje was likely the model, shows the nude Hebrew beauty having her feet washed by a gray-visaged servingwoman; in Bathsheba's hand is the letter from King David commanding her to come to him, for he has fallen in love at the sight of her, though she is the wife of Uriah.

Rich adornments—an earring, a necklace, a bracelet—bespeak her familiarity with luxury, and Bathsheba's sensuality is palpable, her lush body radiant where the light falls on her breasts and belly. But her lower body is in shadow, as the darkness of David's longing and her own—David shall arrange Uriah's death, and David and Bathsheba's infant son shall die—falls across her purity like advancing night. And it is with a strange melting ache that Bathsheba looks at her servant, who in turn is utterly absorbed in the job at hand. Importunate longing is in the mistress's look, and one cannot but think that she is wishing she were not Bathsheba anymore but could be this lowly servant instead.

It is, of course, but a pang of misgiving Bathsheba feels, not a moral com-

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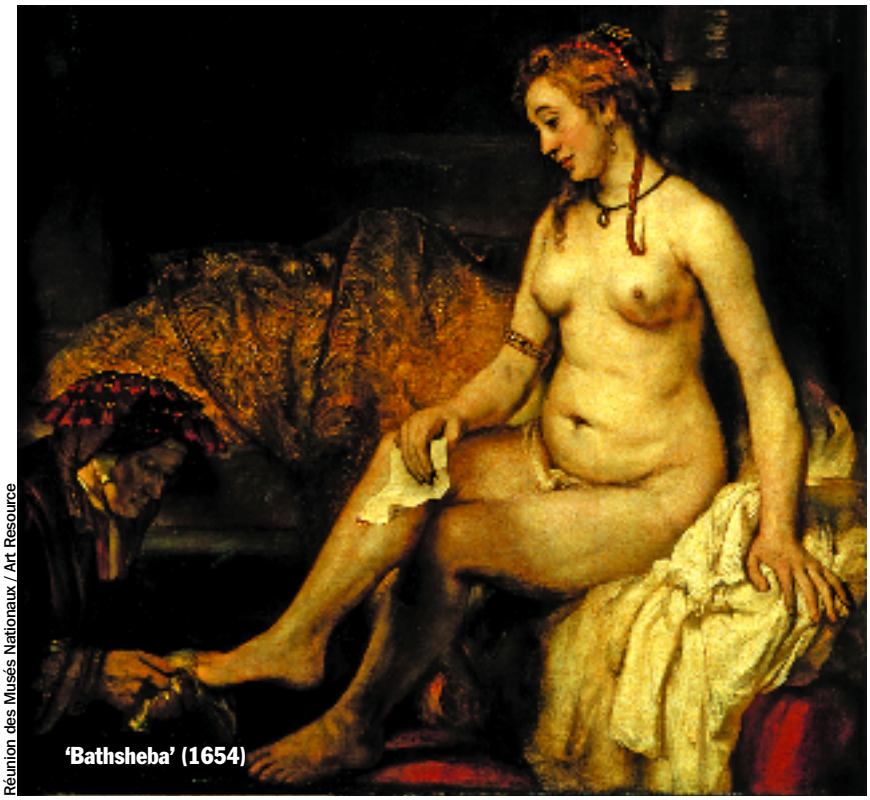
pulsion strong enough to overcome the king's lust, or her own. Rembrandt captures the moment of trial for a woman whose taste for finery, even for grandeur, and whose regard for her own beauty, already proclaim her lost. The artist understands what it means to want the thing you want most, even though it might cost you your decency and self-respect and the life of someone you once claimed to love.

From early in his career, Rembrandt knows the perils of staking everything on a critical moral decision. Even men we commonly think of as saints and heroes fear at times that they have lost all, and Rembrandt portrays them as simply spent, unable any longer to continue the struggle. His *The Apostle Paul* (1630) shows a haggard old man whose struggle is not to elucidate some crux of heavenly wisdom but to keep from falling asleep over his work. Behind him, bathed in pale golden light, a pair of scimitars hangs from a roof beam, and one is reminded that Paul was beheaded for allegiance to the faith. However, here is not a martyr ripening toward a heroic end but a worn-out thinker in danger of nodding off into his eternal slumber. Earthly agonies and heavenly aspirations no longer touch him; his drooping gaze settles on a desk piled with books that are just a shadowy jumble. He looks forward to nothing. Paul has given everything he had to his appointed task, and the immensity of the task has finished him.

Rembrandt painted other pictures of old age, rheumy and crumbling or pugnacious, to the end; but this is a portrait of utter spiritual exhaustion. Faithfully to do God's work on earth may leave you in this condition, and one is hard-pressed to know whether Rembrandt here extols Paul's perseverance, which will win him a place in heaven, or laments his final wreckage.

In the annals of Christendom, the ultimate perseverance in, and triumph over, suffering is of course Christ's, and Rembrandt's renderings of the Crucifixion occupy a signal place in his *oeuvre* and in Christian iconography. Most Christs on the Cross depicted by Renaissance artists—in paintings by Cimabue and Giotto and Grunewald, in sculptures by Ghiberti and Donatello—were emphatically dead, whether as prelude to Resurrection or as unspeakable finality. Michelangelo changed that tradition with a 1539 drawing that showed a muscular warrior, a more powerful version of David, crucified and fighting mortal and spiritual destruction with every ounce of his strength. Rubens's 1613 painting takes after Michelangelo: His Christ strains upward toward salvation with every heroic sinew flexed, so that He resembles a heaven-seeking missile.


Réunion des Musés Nationaux / Art Resource

'Bathsheba' (1654)

Rembrandt, for his part, returns to the image of the broken victim, as in his 1631 painting of a man tortured beyond endurance and about to breathe his last, a spindly and pitiable human specimen quite unlike Michelangelo's and Rubens's indomitable figures. In *The Elevation of the Cross* (1633), Rembrandt's Christ is once again wiry and strong, but his strength is unequal to the extreme physical pain that dominates the rendering: He stretches and braces himself in order to lessen the jolting agony that strikes like lightning when the cross is being raised. And in *The Descent from the Cross* (1633) the dead body is an unwieldy sack of guts, the crumpled Savior nearly bites his own left haunch as the laborers manhandle the corpse without concern for the decorum befitting a dead god.

The face of the man receiving the main weight of the body is so near to Christ's crotch as to disturb the viewer; there is surely no more striking reminder that the Word was indeed made Flesh than this man's chin scraping against the Lord's lower abdomen. Yet for all the pungent details of the Incarnation, a light with no possible earthly source envelops Christ's body: For all its resemblance to the saddest human end, this is indeed a death like no other. Rembrandt knows it, and makes you know it.

As the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga wrote in *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century* (1941), Rembrandt's predilection for biblical subjects lay outside the common run of the national art at that time, which dwelt on homely faces in homely places, upstanding burghers and picturesque peasantry in the settings of

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ordinary life. Yet Rembrandt, too, took prominent part in the portraiture of the newly ascendant middle classes. Indeed, essential to the certification of one's esteemed social position was a portrait by an artist of such stature, and Rembrandt was always glad to perform the service. As in the portraits of Nicolaes van Bambeeck and Agatha Bas (1641), his earnest merchants clutch their moneybags, and their thin-lipped wives try to dissemble their plainness behind lace brocade and Babylonian jewelry. But there is no trace of mockery in the pictures. The way Rembrandt shows them is the way they wish to be seen, and there is no evident presumption of the artist's moral superiority to his sitters.

Where Rembrandt's biblical works represent spiritual colossi straining to the very limits of their strength, or even broken by the struggle, his contemporary portraits show persons honored in their own time and living in well-cushioned circumstances. Yet the life dedicated principally to prosperity, to winning comparative ease and comfort, is not without seriousness of its own, in Rembrandt's eyes. Indeed, although seriousness in the midst of prosperity has for some time been identified as the hallmark of this new middle class, Rembrandt's eyes suggest a connection between the economic life and the spiritual life that the sociologists overlook.

For Max Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Protestant capitalist industriousness is conceived of Calvinist metaphysical terror: In a universe where every soul's eternal fate is predestined by God, successful worldly activity can best serve to dispel religious doubts about one's everlasting destiny and provide "the certainty of grace." (Although if Calvinist doctrine is rightly understood, nothing can really provide such certainty.) For Rembrandt, on the other hand, industriousness and the luxury it affords are sources of satisfaction here and now rather than desperate relief from the fear of hell. Worldly fulfillment matters in its own right, not merely as supposed evidence that one is cut out for heavenly glory.

You cannot tell by looking at these pictures whether the artist believes his subject bound for salvation or perdition. Souls do not make themselves known that way in these faces. What *does* become salient is the sense of notably ascetic faces enjoying their worldly deserts in so far as their nature permits. By their efforts, these well-to-do men and women earned their finery and their expensive portraits, and Rembrandt recognizes the virtues of industry, thrift, prudence, and perseverance that won them their earthly prizes.

By the end of the seventeenth century, Huizinga wrote, widespread prosperity would begin to wilt the energetic Dutch—or redirect their energies into ever more trivial affairs. A man who once would have felt obliged to devote himself to work would instead spend his time "running after his gardener or talking to his steward or notary." Rembrandt painted the flower of the Dutch middle class, which was its ruling class, at the height of its glory. The painter's good fortune and the sitter's were reciprocal.

Although the current academic industry is out to make the chief interest of Rembrandt's painting "the way he applies his paint" (in the words of one fashionable art historian), the ordinary cultivated viewer can always hope to find in him the traditional artistic virtue inherent in the word *vision*: a species of wisdom, connected in representational art with insight into human, inhuman, and divine nature, as acquired by the most attentive observation, a working knowledge of great literary texts, and some sharp-elbowed acquaintance with philosophizing.

Rembrandt thinks in paint, and it is the quality of the thinking that makes for the greatness of the painting. Eye and hand do their genial part, but it is principally the mind of Rembrandt that we still remember today, and that will be remembered 400 years from now. ♦

Dangerous Places

A fictional treatment of an all-too-real world.

BY NEWT GINGRICH

Former secretary of defense Bill Cohen has had a fascinating career, and he continues it with this novel. I recommend it cheerfully to anyone interested in a good read. It contains a number of provocative thoughts about national security in the 21st century, and some tantalizing tidbits about power struggles in Washington.

Dragon Fire
by William S. Cohen
Forge, 384 pp., $24.95

One of the great virtues of fiction is it allows you to learn about and think about possibilities that have not yet occurred. For example, Tom Clancy, in one of his novels, had a fully-loaded 747 airliner crash into the Capitol long before 9/11. He outlined in detail the catastrophic impact of that much jet fuel on a building and the effect of that hot a fire. Cohen begins here with a series of targeted killings in Washington, including a secretary of defense. While you may have been reading about targeted killings in Iraq, assassinations in Lebanon, murders in Afghanistan, Thailand, Pakistan, and elsewhere, it may not have occurred to you that such a systematic campaign could be carried out in America's capi-

Newt Gingrich, speaker of the ouse from 1995-99, is the author, most recently, of Rediscovering God in America: Reflections on the Role of Faith in Our Nation's History and Future.

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tal. It is a skillful and sobering opening.

Dragon Fire includes occasional chilling references to the danger of a war between the United States and the Iranian dictatorship. Cohen has the Chinese assert in a planning session among themselves:

> "The United States," Li continued, "is unlikely to strike Iran. But Iran will strike at American targets all over the world, especially in America itself. It will be a worldwide war. One for which the American people are not prepared." Li seemed to find particular delight in this notion.

In these few words a former senator and secretary of defense communicates his sense that, in 2006, despite 9/11 and everything that has followed, the American people still have not come to grips with how dangerous the world is.

The very real danger of a nuclear terrorist threat is also captured in a brief exchange:

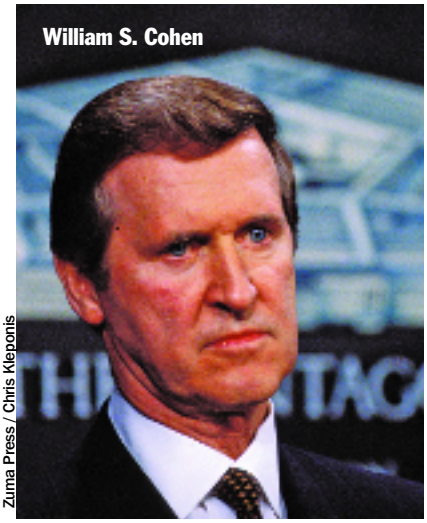
> "Secretary Santini, I've read that in response to a reporter's question of what your biggest nightmare was, the thing that kept you awake at night, you said 'the threat of nuclear terrorism.'" Santini nodded. "A nuclear bomb, detonated in a major city would kill hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people instantly. Many more beyond the initial blast area would die of radiation burns and poisoning. Such an attack would have economic consequences beyond the monstrous human toll."

At a later point, Cohen notes, "The fear of more homeland attacks was not just a matter of paranoia. America had real enemies and they were waiting to strike at the least sign of inattention or weakness."

What better witness could we have to the need for the Department of Homeland Security to conduct several nuclear exercises a year to test our ability to survive a terrorist attack on an American city?

In passing, Cohen describes one of the greatest problems facing American planners in Iraq and beyond. He describes the challenge in unifying East and West Berlin and notes that, while the physical wall has fallen, "the wall, it is still there, the wall of the mind." In all too many places, we imagine that if we replace a corrupt, vicious, torturing, and murdering dictatorship there will spring forth a new, democratic, honest, and transparent system of self-government, pursuing happiness and living in peace. We underestimate the walls of the mind that remain long after the system changes. It is a useful insight into the challenges of the modern world.

Cohen's insights go from the larger world to the smaller world of Washington gossip, maneuver, and manipulation. He has been in the rooms in the Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House, and it illuminates his novel. As a novelist writing a thriller, he employs caricature: the weak president; the noble war hero-senator turned financier turned secretary of defense; the unscrupulous, endlessly ambitious national security adviser acting dishonestly and ruthlessly to undermine more honest people in order to manipulate his own rise.


William S. Cohen

Zuma Press / Chris Kleponis

Yet contained within each caricature there is more than a kernel of truth. There are people actually like this. They *do* operate in remarkably different ways, and march to remarkably different drummers.

The genius of America has been the very inefficiency of the system that enabled the honest to outlast the dishonest, and the noble to outlast the vicious. And in *Dragon Fire*, American idealism and sincerity once again triumph. Interestingly, they triumph over both bad Americans and bad Chinese.

This is a useful novel to remind us that, beyond the war on terror and the threat of Islamist fascism, there is the great emerging force of the Chinese nation. Cohen is not anti-Chinese; if anything, he is sympathetic to the good Chinese. However, he is anti-bad Chinese, and he notes their potential for enormous harm both because they play by different rules than we do (assassinations in Washington, for example) and because they can plot in secret while Americans naively relax in public.

Dragon Fire points to a real-life need for a strategic approach to national security that has to take into account both the emerging challenge of a great Chinese economy and an energetic Chinese nation (not an enemy but a legitimate competitor) and the more immediate threat of an emerging third world war, which ranges from North Korea through Waziristan and Afghanistan on to Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Islamist fanatics of al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and their allies (including those in Britain, France, Holland, Canada, etc.) and, finally, to the dictators of Cuba and Venezuela and, potentially, Bolivia.

Cohen's novel will cause readers to think about both how dangerous the world can be, and how rapidly a threat can emerge from directions we are not currently thinking about. He comes to the business of describing the modern world from a remarkable range of personal achievements. Cohen has written several good novels, mysteries, poetry, and works of nonfiction, while serving in local office (as a mayor) as well as national office. In addition to his intellectual breadth and dexterity, Cohen was all-state in basketball in both high school and college, no doubt inspiring *Dragon Fire*'s athletic secretary of defense and former senator.

The last 30 pages are both too simplistic and too heroic, a combination of James Bond and a magic solution, and probably the single improbable part of an otherwise imaginative book. ♦

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Get Unhappy

The future of pessimism has never looked brighter.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

Nearly a century ago Max Beerbohm, in his essay "Kolniyatsch," noticed "a seemingly inexhaustible supply of anguished souls from the Continent—infantile, wide-eyed Slavs, Titan Teutons, greatly blighted Scandinavians, all of them different, but all of them raving in one common darkness"—including, of course, the late Luntic Kolniyatsch, recently translated "from the original Gibrisch."

Pessimism
Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit
by Joshua Foa Dienstag
Princeton, 314 pp., $35

Beerbohm's satire on the vogue of pessimism (Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Strindberg, *et al*.) was written in 1913. The disasters of the 20th century officially got underway the following year. They eventually did in the kind of historical optimism represented by a belief in inexorable progress, Hegel, Marxism, and radiant utopian futures in general. The future, as Arthur C. Clarke once remarked, isn't what it used to be.

Neither is pessimism. Modern philosophical pessimism, Joshua Foa Dienstag contends, began in the 18th century, called into existence by the same new linear sense of time and history that produced modern utopian optimism. In fact, the two, optimism and pessimism, seem to be paired, forming a single vaudeville act in which mismatched partners—one fat, one thin—belabor each other with rolled-up newspapers for two centuries. They may have been given the hook, yanked off the world stage at the same time.

Dienstag, however, is optimistic about pessimism's future. It has history on its side, because history isn't on anyone's side. History refuses to follow anyone's script, even a pessimist script of inexorable decline, and thus breeds irony, the bread and butter of real pessimists. And for this reason, he argues, pessimism isn't necessarily gloomy. It releases us from history as a forced march, an exercise in inevitability. It can be tonic, even liberating.

At least, it can be funny. Not only have most pessimists been ironists (as he points out); most humorists and satirists (as he doesn't point out) have been pessimists, including a large crop of them grown in the optimistic soil of America: Ambrose Bierce, Mark Twain, James Thurber, S.J. Perelman, Woody Allen, Larry David. Laughter is what comic pessimists offer in place of utopia and its usually humorless gatekeepers. They see life as fundamentally slapstick. Illusion is the banana peel, optimism the pompous pedestrian it upends. Even the seemingly pitch-dark philosophy of the arch-pessimist Schopenhauer is a metaphysics of universal futility bordering on farce, Laurel and Hardy's "Music Box" on a cosmic scale.

So pessimists tend to laugh, or at least tend to recommend it: "He who has the courage to laugh is master of the world much like him who is prepared to die" (Giacomo Leopardi). "You ought to learn to laugh, my young friends, if you are hell-bent on remaining pessimists" (Nietzsche).

But Dienstag, a professor of political science at UCLA, has more sober fish to fry. He wants to make the case that pessimism forms a major modern philosophical tradition. He knows that it's nothing new, naming Heraclitus, Greek tragedy, and the Stoics and Epicureans as early instances. But he argues that only modern pessimism, represented by his subjects Rousseau, Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, Unamuno, Camus, and Cioranis, built on four crucial propositions: "That time is a burden; that the course of history is in some sense ironic; that freedom and happiness are incompatible; and that human existence is absurd."

He brackets Rousseau, the first eminent thinker to break with Enlightenment optimism, and Leopardi, the melancholy Italian poet and author of ironic philosophical dialogues, as "cultural pessimists" who blame our predicament on our modern, compulsive, time-possessed consciousness. Rousseau, of course, espoused both a paradise-lost primitivism and an ideal republicanism; but in his last books (*Reveries of a Solitary Walker* and the posthumous *Confessions*) he, in effect, embraced withdrawal into the wistful tranquility and twilight happiness of solitude and revery and nature.

Leopardi just gave up on tranquility and happiness: "Live, and be great and unhappy." Columbus was his model of a well-lived life. By leaving security behind and making life an adventure, he experienced it intensely, with happiness an irrelevance superseded by discovery and achievement.

Nietzsche, who gets a later chapter to himself, was to make the same move, insisting that to get the most out of life we must "live dangerously." But I would say that Nietzsche, pining for his own tumultuous paradise lost, the Renaissance, along with other lost cultural vitalities, and dreaming of a brazenly vigorous future, is more of a "cultural pessimist" (but less of a pessimist) than Leopardi.

Dienstag next, more convincingly, pairs Schopenhauer and his psychological heir, Freud, as "metaphysical pessimists." Freud was anti-metaphysical, but both men saw our situation in terms of inherent, inescapable self-division and frustration. Schopenhauer advocated a half-ascetic, half-

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aesthetic detachment from life. Freud, whose best offer was only to "replace neurotic suffering with ordinary unhappiness," left room for an active, if stoical, life resigned to discontents and their civilization.

Then comes a trio of "existential pessimists." The Spaniard Miguel de Unamuno thought that human life is tragic in form, since our time-bound consciousness will always tempt us with the hope of its infinite duration, or immortality, while simultaneously squelching it with the awareness of death. Albert Camus, who wrote, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide," offered as an answer to our tragic or absurd condition a "humiliated" thought that renounces religious and utopian consolations but can still inspire an intensely engaged life devoted to art and political resistance to unjust power.

As for the scathingly ironic aphorist E.M. Cioran, he's a faint, Romanian/French echo of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, with something of Nietzsche's paradoxical wit and historical range and something of Schopenhauer's sardonic gallows humor and glacial detachment. Shelving the faith of his father (an Eastern Orthodox priest) and his own youthful flirtation with Romanian fascism, he wound up advocating, precisely, nothing.

Dienstag, following Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset, ends a little weirdly by enlisting the hallucinatory and everhopeful Don Quixote as a pessimist hero. He argues that the quest, an imaginative plunge into the unknown, is the ultimate pessimist paradigm. This might surprise quietist, stay-at-home pessimists like Rousseau and Schopenhauer and Cioran. But it brings us back to laughter.

As Nietzsche pointed out, Cervantes and his 16th-century readers were laughing, with a good deal of cruelty thrown in, at Quixote. Only in the romantic era did fanciful quests start to seem noble and exemplary. And with this dose of romanticism, the propositional architecture of Dienstag's pessimistic philosophical tradition seems to collapse. It's hard to see why the quest couldn't be turned away from windmills toward some new utopia on the far horizon, making his ideal quixotic pessimist a kind of desperate optimist.

Why not? It happened to Nietzsche, who spotted a life-affirming *Übermensch* on the horizon. Some other pessimist could set out quixotically for the utopian point where freedom and happiness meet, if they don't meet short of utopia (which they do, incidentally). But that just proves that pessimists go off in their own directions, and sometimes stray off the pessimist reservation altogether.

Dienstag's gallery of incompatibles proves that pessimists can't be made to march in step, even as a coherent philosophical tradition. And the other thing that this densely argued, but always lively and engaging, book successfully proves is that pessimism works best when it drops the arguments in its favor and settles for bitter laughter. ♦

Utopian Blues

Will Self sees the future, and it isn't working.

BY DANIEL SULLIVAN

The chief charm, and perhaps the major fault, of this remarkable novel is its casual inventiveness. On the one hand, *The Book of Dave* conjures two fascinating worlds out of clever allusions to and elaborations of literary tropes, religious ideas, and the effluvia of common culture. This absorbs the reader and sustains the book for awhile. On the other hand, the author undermines the profound questions his satire poses by ending the book too conventionally and almost dismissively, leaving most of the characters in cardboard. At times the reader wants to defend the book from the author who has so ably won the reader's loyalty.

The Book of Dave
A Novel
by Will Self
Bloomsbury USA, 416 pp., $24.95

The Book of Dave is the English writer Will Self's fifth novel, and among his most ambitious and imaginative. Critically acclaimed, as well as controversial, in Britain, Self deliberately tries to unsettle the reader by presenting grotesque but vaguely parallel worlds. Previous novels, for instance, involved a man and woman who swapped sexual organs, an artist who finds himself in a world dominated by apes, and a woman who dies and moves to a community of the dead in the London suburbs. Self sustains these stories, which essentially rest on one or a few off-kilter notions, by the sheer force of his relentless prose and the provocative ideas it constantly raises. Finally, like Martin Amis or Salman Rushdie, Self combines low and high culture into a polymorphous carnival of words and ideas. The reader is sometimes breathless just trying to take it all in.

All of this characterizes *The Book of Dave*. The novel concerns the descent into madness of Dave Rudman, a bitter London cabbie in an acrimonious custody battle with his ex-wife. Fueled by depression, medication, and dementia, Dave pens a ranting manifesto that includes his encyclopedic knowledge of London's streets as well as a plan for society based on "fair" divorce: Mummies and daddies live apart and share their children equally during the week. Dave buries the book in his ex-wife's backyard, and, after an environmental cataclysm floods most of Britain, the

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rediscovered volume becomes the holy book of a new society. Some 500 years "After Dave," or "A.D.," a young boy named Carl and his teacher try to find Carl's father, a prophet who was exiled as a heretic. Self shuttles between the two storylines, in which two occasionally mirroring plots unfold.

This fantastic premise is pregnant with potential, satirical and otherwise. Self exploits the potential cleverly in some places and profoundly in others. For instance, the people of the new world speak a dialect of English—Mockni—which Self spins from cockney, the Esperanto of pop commercial culture, and sheer imagination. This is both an appropriate innovation for an author who complains that he runs out of words and a sly rebuke to critics who complain that his prose is verbose and overwrought. Moreover, Mockni is amusing. "Woolly" is the word for sheep; "bubbery" that for a tweed or rough woolen cloth; "boiler" means grandmother; and a "queer" is a man without children. It's a challenge at first, but Self provides a dictionary at the back of the book.

More profoundly, though, *The Book of Dave* seems to be about the crippling nihilism of a world without transcendent meaning and the tensions and contradictions of the religious personality. These themes appear in the context of two failed relationships between fathers and sons. In the story of Dave himself, Self weaves the inevitable failures of the cabbie's misbegotten marriage into the fabric of postmodern English society. Dave's London revels in the antagonisms, inadequacies, selfishness, and loneliness that the end of an age has laid bare. No religion or social order shields the characters from the emptying effect Dave's divorce has on all involved, especially Dave and his son Carl. Dave's descent into madness ultimately seems a graphic dissection of a father insisting on how much his son matters to him, even as he loses him, in a world where little matters very much.

The second story takes place in the dystopia of Ing, which is governed by the PCO—i.e., the Public Carriage Office of London. The PCO has imposed Dave's intolerant, misogynistic, rigid dogma upon the people, punishing any deviation as "flying" (heresy). Cruel "drivers" (priests) in black robes bearing the sign of the wheel jealously protect the power of the PCO. This is an obvious and tired riff on the familiar religions (with particular references to Catholicism and Islam), and, left at that, it would be rather boring. The interesting ideas appear when Self characterizes the spiritual or religious sentiments that the PCO represses: Carl's longing for meaning and knowledge, his sense of separation from "davine" orthodoxy, and the pain of children forced to live between—and really without—parents.

Will Self

Michael Wildsmith

In the background is the story of Carl's father, a prophet who preached that the strictures of the PCO could be abandoned in favor of a liberating doctrine of living life as best as one can according to love instead of rules. To a certain extent, this part of the book recapitulates the essential tension in religion between the prophet and the priest. The one preaches an exciting message of religious fervor while the other must maintain a church that organizes, disciplines, and ameliorates the lives of people on a daily basis. The dynamic has reappeared throughout Christian history, from St. Anthony's flight into the desert to Luther's Reformation to the contemporary debate between the orthodox and the progressive in the mainstream denominations.

These serious ideas emerge from the fun and fascination of interpreting Self's allusive vision. Indeed, the book does not compel this commentary at all; one mark of *The Book of Dave*'s sophistication is the room it leaves for readers to fill its gaps with their own impressions. Self's ideas and imaginings tumble out willy-nilly, trundling through the text with refreshing discretion. This presentation is charming, but a book that emanates from and lives on ideas must ultimately do them justice, and here Self stumbles. In the last portion things suddenly fall into place and postmodern dystopia portrayed earlier evaporates amid several *dei ex machinis*. Self finally seems to urge upon us that we should just tend to our gardens like Voltaire's Candide. But after all the social dysfunction traced here, this is unsatisfying and shortchanges the complex portrait of intellectual and social life that Self paints.

It is usually shallow to object to the "message" of a novel. But the intellectual shortcoming of *The Book of Dave* derives ultimately from insufficient attention to literary qualities. Self has declared, "I have great difficulty with plot and I have never got on with character, and have always found them very artificial and essentially romantic. . . . I have largely written about ideas." He is right. Aside from Dave himself, most of Self's characters remain abstract roles rather than complex persons. As a consequence Self's ideas often seem naked and unguarded. But they are most rich when enmeshed in the pathos of the story's personalities.

Self's sheer skill and creativity with the English language and the book's bubbling fount of ideas take the novel quite far. But when it ends, the reader finds himself rather stranded. This doesn't unsettle the reader; it merely disappoints. ♦

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Lord of the Wilderness

A colonial power-broker gets his due.

BY PATRICK J. WALSH

William Johnson (1715-1774) became First Baron of New York in 1756 when George II rewarded him for his victory at Lake George during the French and Indian War. Johnson, superintendent of Indian affairs, successfully recruited Iroquois to fight for Britain. His achievements and rise to aristocracy were remarkable for an impoverished Irishman from County Meath whose family had once fought against England.

Although not holding the balance of power between the French and British in North America, the Indians were important allies, especially for trade in furs that sold for high prices throughout Europe. Being fewer in number than the English colonists, the French had to cultivate a strong relationship with the Indians. The French also approached the Indians as human beings, and treated them respectfully; the English treated them as inferiors till William Johnson settled on lands owned by a wealthy uncle in 1738 along the banks of the Mohawk River near Albany.

Getty Hulton Archive / MPI

White Savage
William Johnson and the Invention of America
by Fintan O'Toole
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 416 pp., $26

This volume is a welcome look at the nearly forgotten and fascinating man who married an Indian, became a wealthy merchant, and was adopted into the Mohawk tribe as Warraghiyagey, "a man who undertakes great things." Europeans romanticized Johnson as a lord of the wilderness who understood and tamed the noble savage. Benjamin West celebrated Johnson in his paintings. And James Fenimore Cooper's Hawkeye in *The Last of the Mohicans* was based on aspects of Johnson's character.

Fintan O'Toole, of the *Irish Times*, has written a fine narrative, but one clouded by the contemporary political jargon of daily journalism. He is not satisfied with a straightforward historical look at Johnson and his time; his Johnson is seen through a haze of the present, what Allen Tate called *provincialism*, the inability to transcend one's own time.

O'Toole uses Johnson to address what he sees as the overriding concern of our time: "Globalization . . . [a] fancy term for Americanization." O'Toole believes that "corporations imagine a universal America [and] that American power in the world is based on the hard facts of economic and military might." This "derives from the potency of the American epic: the conquest of the New World; the triumph of 'civilization' over 'savagery'; the vestigial glamour of the defeated indigenous people; the invention of the 'white race'; the allure of heroic, individualistic violence."

In exploring "the circumstances that gave rise to America's myth of itself," O'Toole turns Sir William Johnson, a champion of British imperialism, into a kind of trailblazing hero for a failed multiculturalism—although even this point, sprinkled through the work, does not hold, as O'Toole admits later that Johnson swindled the Indians out of land and was himself a slave owner.

O'Toole also says there were aspects of Johnson's Irish background that made him "peculiarly sensitive" to the nature of Indian culture. But this is even less defined than Johnson's multiculturalism. You could ascertain that Johnson had sympathy for the Indians because the Irish had also suffered under British imperialism. But O'Toole suggests that Johnson's bond with the Indians stemmed from a shared "ancient animist religion" predating Christianity—a faith of "sacred trees" and "holy wells," which Johnson was supposedly familiar with in Ireland. This is, of course, more provincialism, an intrusion of the present into the past, since this type of druidic paganism is popular in modern Ireland.

O'Toole questions the integrity of words like civilization and savagery. He correctly points out that Western man is not superior to other human beings; but what he fails to recognize is that certain Western standards of truth are superior to the standards of other civilizations.

The use of any word is a moral choice, so it is a shame that O'Toole does not question other word meanings, especially multiculturalism. Such words are part of a provincial view of the world that, Allen Tate said, "sees in material welfare and legal justice the whole solution to the human problem." ♦

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Debunking Delbanco

Sometimes style can impede the story.

BY BARTON SWAIM

Nicholas Delbanco

Warner Books / Emma Dodge Hansen

The English critic George Saintsbury once observed of a mediocre novelist that his novels had every quality of great novels except the quality of being great novels. I find that to be true of nearly every work of fiction—the ones I've read, I mean—published since about 1970. Many, indeed most, of today's highly rated novels are works of technical perfection and genuine stylistic originality. They're also not very good. Take any novel by Sebastian Faulks: Each of his books strikes you as brilliant while you read it; then you put it down and suddenly realize its moral emptiness.

Spring and Fall
by Nicholas Delbanco
Warner, 304 pp., $24.99

Something close to the opposite is true of *Spring and Fall*. It has most or all the defects that blight second-rate fiction. And yet it is morally serious in a way that most contemporary fiction isn't, and for that reason alone it's worth noticing.

Spring and Fall is the story of two people, Lawrence and Hermia, who fall in love as undergraduates in 1962, drift apart, live for 40 years away from each other, then meet again on a Mediterranean cruise in 2004. Lawrence was at Harvard, Hermia at Radcliffe. He becomes an architect and then professor of architecture; she marries unwisely and lives for decades as a wealthy divorcée.

First, its flaws. Novels written by professors of English tend to contain far more "literary" stuff than real life does (the characters are always quoting Wallace Stevens or writing doctoral dissertations on Wordsworth) and one always has the sense that such academic novelists haven't ventured off campus with adequate regularity. Nicholas Delbanco is the Robert Frost Distinguished University Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan. Whatever it takes to become such a polysyllabic entity, it probably isn't also what it takes to write great novels.

I may sound here like a poor imitation of Tom Wolfe, but *Spring and Fall* is the work of a man who has spent too much time thinking about his style. Delbanco has written nearly 20 novels, and yet he seems undecided about what he wants his style to look like. This sentence is from a scene in which Hermia watches as her father dies from a drunk-driving accident:

> Hermia spent the entire time in Hyannis, waiting with her mother and listening to doctors and visiting the ICU and, when permitted, sitting at the side of this object attached to machinery, this arrangement of tubing and bottles and monitors with numbers flashing on a screen and lights that went green and then red.

The brutal straightforwardness of the sentence represents a certain kind of style; it's effective in its own way. But here's the next line: "A little, in the waiting room, she slept." So who's writing this, anyway? The writer of the first sentence, if he were more at ease with his style, would have written the second sentence like this: "She slept a little in the waiting room." Anyhow he certainly wouldn't have gone in for that slightly confusing literary inversion. This kind of stylistic indecisiveness pervades the novel.

It's not that Delbanco isn't a careful writer; it's that he's too careful. He worries too much about what readers will think. That is, perhaps, why he italicizes so many words; he's afraid his readers won't know where to place the emphasis. A typical paragraph contains these: "not so much a proposition as a *proposal*"; "money's no object, or not an *objection*"; "it's such *beautiful* property." After a *while* this gets in the *way*.

For the same reason, Delbanco likes to reword his phrases, as if we hadn't got it the first time.

"It was, she thought, a long wakeful nightmare, a dream she would have to endure.

"But this was a dream she couldn't stop dreaming, a nightmare she failed to escape."

This isn't the writing of a writer; it's the writing of a Distinguished University Professor of English Language and Literature.

These unfavorable impressions

Barton Swaim is writing a book on 19th-century Scottish literary critics.

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weren't assuaged by the fact that the novel's pages—and *Spring and Fall* has this in common with most "literary" novels these days—are crowded with the sorts of characters most people don't know: two professors of architecture, a professor of English, a wealthy art dealer, three artists, a reporter for Reuters, a literary agent, and at least two members of communes. And, on top of that, there's a heavy layer of what can only be called learning: allusions to classical drama and Sartre, quotations from Shakespeare and Pound, and abstruse discussions of architectural theory. Considered by itself, there's nothing necessarily wrong with any of this, but it won't convince any reader that this writer knows much about life. One wonders how long it's been since Nicholas Delbanco talked to a deer hunter, or ate a chili dog.

And yet, and yet—Delbanco has managed to put his finger on what, so far as I'm aware, no other contemporary writer of fiction has touched: The ways in which well-meaning people inherit the self-absorption of their parents and, despite their intentions, find themselves incapable of behaving selflessly to their husbands and wives and children. Hermia's thoughts, occasioned by Lawrence's youthful inability to love her exclusively, announce the book's theme:

"Fidelity meant faithfulness; it meant wanting only one thing. It meant there was no difference between what you had and what you wanted, no space between the space you occupied and where you hoped to be."

But in her self-absorbed confusion, Hermia finds another, more attractive, abstraction: "Integrity meant oneness; it meant staying faithful and true to yourself." We want another, but mainly we just want ourselves.

For the next four decades Lawrence and Hermia, both decent and well-intentioned people, stay faithful to themselves. They help their friends; they provide for their children; they don't lie—or anyhow, don't lie without good reason. But somehow, in the confusing and heartbreaking situations in which everybody sometimes finds himself, they always manage to choose their own interests over those of their spouses and children. Lawrence, understandably but also rather conveniently deciding he's "not cut out" for fatherhood, goes his own way and lets his ex-wives raise his children. Hermia genuinely loves her daughter, but not sufficiently to direct her.

So had their parents done before them. Indeed, as any post-Boomer might suspect, it is possible that the "greatest generation" was not. Just look at their children. It is a melancholy fact that catastrophic wars make survivors more interested in making themselves comfortable than they would have been otherwise: In Europe, the war generation set up socialist governments; in America, people let their children raise themselves.

Lawrence and Hermia are textbook Boomers. At several points Delbanco subtly raises the point that his two principals are (though they're far from realizing it) merely living out the soft narcissism handed to them by their parents. Asked by his sister whether he's ever thought of himself as having repeated the mistakes of mom and dad, who also divorced, Lawrence at first pretends not to hear the question, then spouts off some contemptible banalities about believing in marriage but not his own particular marriages. Both Lawrence and Hermia were made to find their own ways, morally and in every sense but financially, and both have spent their lives wondering why their chief pursuits never satisfy: in Lawrence's case, sex and academic accomplishment; in Hermia's, unrequited love for a daughter. In the absence of moral direction, they live by clichés, glib slogans, and thoughtless political allegiances—the true legacies of the sixties. ♦

You've Got Males

Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, two guys, and what?

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Who's the most successful female movie director in the world? If you even hazard a guess, chances are you'll say Nora Ephron, who made *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail*. But in fact, Ephron hasn't had a hit since 1998. Or Amy Heckerling, who made *Look Who's Talking* and *Clueless*. But Heckerling hasn't done anything of note this decade. There are others you might name, like the Indian director Mira Nair, whose *Salaam Bombay* and *Monsoon Wedding* are among the cinematic highlights of the past 15 years. But when you think of box office, you don't think of Mira Nair.

The Holiday
Directed by Nancy Meyers

John Podhoretz is THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

In fact, the world's most successful female film director is someone of whom you have almost certainly never heard. Her name is Nancy Meyers. For two decades she was a screenwriter and producer, collaborating with director Charles Shyer (then her husband) on a remarkable string of comedy successes—*Benjamin*, *Baby Boom*, the two *Father of the Bride* pictures with Steve Martin. After their divorce, Shyer has descended to the B-list after two horrendous and financially disastrous movies, *The Affair of the Necklace* and *Alfie*, suggested to everyone in Hollywood that perhaps Shyer had coasted for years on his wife's talent.

In the meanwhile, Meyers has taken

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off into the stratosphere as a writer-director. She has made one monster hit—*What Women Want*, the last comedy Mel Gibson will probably ever make, in which Gibson finds himself gifted with the supernatural power to damn all Jews to the nether regi . . . sorry, to read women's minds. And she has made the fresh, bright, and peppy *Something's Gotta Give*, the glossiest romantic comedy out of Hollywood since *Tootsie*, with Diane Keaton as the 58-year-old divorced playwright who finally tames a sexagenarian sexist sex symbol played by Jack Nicholson.

Now, she has made the chick flick of the Christmas season, a transatlantic life-swap picture called *The Holiday* with Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet—and initial returns suggest it's going to do decent business.

Whether she is its writer-producer or its director, a Meyers movie is a very recognizable object. Her characters live in dream houses so sumptuously designed and lasciviously photographed that the term "real estate porn" could have been invented to describe them. And they are lovable bundles of neuroses whose inability to enjoy their enchanted lives makes it possible for the rest of us to like them when we should feel free to hate them. They long for the simple things in life, mostly because they have everything else.

Meyers wants to catch sociological lightning in a bottle when it comes to the lives and careers of American women. Her movies from 1980 onward offer a kind of pop-culture chronicle of feminism and its discontents. In *Private Benjamin*, a sheltered Jewish-American princess finds her inner strength after she is tricked into joining the Army. In *Baby Boom*, a hard-charging executive learns what really matters in life when a relative dies suddenly and leaves a six-month-old baby in her care. In *What Women Want*, another hard-charging female executive is revealed to be self-doubting and self-critical, forced to hide her extremely kind nature behind a nothing-bothers-me façade. And in *Something's Gotta Give*, a woman past menopause finds new artistic inspiration when she has her heart broken by a shallow cad—and even wins the ardent devotion of a doctor 20 years her junior who loves her for her mind.

These movies are surprisingly long and surprisingly heartfelt. They clearly reflect Meyers's own life struggles and are resolved in a way that fulfills not only her audience's wishes but, clearly, Meyers' own wishes as well. How can you work at a job and raise children and give them both the attention they deserve? Well, if you're Diane Keaton in *Baby Boom*, you leave the heartless

Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.

Kate Winslet

precincts of New York for the cutest little town in Vermont you ever saw, start your own organic baby-food business, and find love with the hunky local vet. Is it unfair that a woman just shy of 60 might find it hard to get a date? Well, then, Meyers will see to it that Keanu Reeves hungrily pursues Diane Keaton in *Something's Gotta Give* before the bounder played by Jack Nicholson comes along begging for a second chance with this aged goddess.

Are these silly fantasies? No sillier than romantic fantasies of any other age. Like any romantic comedy in any other era, these movies end with an image of domestic contentment. Meyers just makes sure that she adds career contentment into the mix for the perfect fulfillment of a contemporary woman's dreams.

And it is precisely the lack of a career struggle on display that makes *The Holiday* so unmemorable and disappointing. She had a potentially inspired idea—L.A. chick Cameron Diaz and London chick Kate Winslet swap lives for two weeks, with Winslet bopping around Diaz's immaculate Beverly Hills mansion while Diaz curls up in Winslet's cozy suburban cottage. But Meyers failed to make either woman even modestly interesting or her struggles even remotely believable. Winslet's character has wasted three years of her life mooning over a colleague she once dated. Diaz is depressed because she's so controlled and polished that she doesn't moon over anybody. Of course, by the end of the picture, Winslet ceases her mooning days while Diaz learns to moon over the conveniently sexy but geographically undesirable Jude Law.

Here's the thing: Why should anybody care that Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet—two of the most gloriously attractive people on this planet—are forlorn or unlucky in love? And how on earth did Meyers make the colossal mistake of imagining that the elfin Jack Black—who can be a dynamic performer at times but can't act his way out of a paper bag—would be any kind of match for the formidable Winslet? She looks as if she could step on him like a bug.

Meyers's great insight as a moviemaker was that fatuous romantic dilemmas aren't enough to catch our attention any longer. There has to be something else, something more arresting, going on as well—trying to balance family and career, finding love at midlife after divorce, falling for a colleague who might be trying to steal your job at the same time. There's nothing else going on in *The Holiday* besides the romance or lack thereof, and as Lorenz Hart once put it, unrequited love's a bore.

The Holiday will not mar Meyers's standing as the world's most successful female director. But it won't do anything to help her achieve recognition on a par with Nora Ephron, either. Maybe Meyers's frustration will offer her some fodder for a new picture that won't just lie there like a wet sock the way *The Holiday* does. ♦

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Books in Brief

May we recommend …

A handful of interesting titles for the discriminating—and desperately shopping—book-buyer.

First, something of a publishing miracle: ***The 20 British Prime Ministers of the 20th Century*** **(Haus, $16.95 each)**. This is a series of brief paperback biographies of such uniform interest and quality that American readers, who may know the names of only a handful of British prime ministers, might find themselves consuming the entire series for sheer pleasure.

Some of the subjects (most notably Winston Churchill) cover ground that is well-traveled; but even the Churchill volume (by Chris Wrigley) puts its hero in fresh perspective, and tells the nonspecialist reader everything worth knowing. Some of the more recent lives will be of particular interest to STANDARD readers—Clare Beckett on Margaret Thatcher, Mick Temple on Tony Blair—but the century has coughed up some fascinating characters (Eric Midwinter on Lord Salisbury, Francis Beckett on Harold Macmillan) and seminal events (Hugh Purcell on Lloyd George, Anne Perkins on Stanley Baldwin) and ideas (David Howell on Clement Attlee, Denis MacShane on Edward Heath) that still resonate.

This is an extraordinary achievement, not least because the accounts of the lesser known (Andrew Taylor on Bonar Law, Lord Hattersley on Henry Campbell-Bannerman) are as riveting as chronicles of the famous (Graham Macklin on Neville Chamberlain, Peter Wilby on Anthony Eden). It also puts the recent *American Presidents Series*, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., to shame: While a handful of those presidential lives are distinguished (Josiah Bunting III on Ulysses S. Grant), others are symptoms of Schlesinger's misjudgment and wearisome bias (John Dean on Warren G. Harding). As with parliamentary debate and serial television dramas, this is just one of those things that the British do better than we can.

Which brings us to ***Marking the Hours: English People & their Prayers 1240-1570*** **by Eamon Duffy (Yale, 208 pp., $35).** Duffy, a Cambridge historian of religion, considers the Book of Hours as a mirror to medieval devotion, the literature of faith, Christian art, and the lives of those readers who annotated these illuminated manuscripts with reflections, amendments, and homely details. Scholars have generally regarded such marginal comments as a form of bibliographic vandalism, but Duffy considers them "valuable clues to the beliefs and devotional habits of medieval people—not least to the innermost thoughts of women, who formed a large proportion of the medieval market for such books." This is an eloquent and compelling work, splendidly illustrated, and drawing from the remnants a complex picture of an alien society.

Now, three unique volumes for disparate needs and tastes. If your reaction to the sight of those gray, bushy-tailed rodents swarming across the garden is to grab your shotgun—figuratively speaking, of course—then ***Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide*** **by Richard W. Thorington Jr. and Katie Ferrell (Johns Hopkins, 208 pp., $24.95)** is essential reading. As it happens, the variety of squirrels is not only abundant—there are some 278 species on all continents except Australia and Antarctica—but astonishingly diverse. They come in different sizes, colors, and shapes, and with differing skills (some can fly), but a uniformly satisfying temperament. Kindly disposed towards humans, they are not averse to eating from the proffered hand, sharing indoors warmth, and matching wits about the bird-feeder. And while some people may persist in regarding squirrels as pests, the authors make the case that we ought to accept them on their own terms as consummate entertainers, skilled engineers, and friendly, family-oriented neighbors.

Books about celebrity residences tend to involve lush, full-color photographs of professionally decorated rooms devoid of personality. Whether or not the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) qualifies as a celebrity, his austere, three-room, cozy-Teutonic writing cabin near the village of Todtnauberg in the high Black Forest of southern Germany provides a matchless glimpse of the domestic life of a famous mind of the 20th century. ***Heidegger's Hut*** **by Adam Sharr (MIT, 112 pp., $24.95)** requires no familiarity with Heidegger's complicated, abstruse thought; but its plain black-and-white pictures and illuminating text allow the reader to decide about the relationship, if any, between *die Hütte* and Heidegger's controversial life and philosophy.

Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1,500 Years **by S. Fred Singer and Dennis T. Avery (Rowman & Littlefield, 276 pp., $24.95)** contributes new evidence to the debate—and in readable form. Their thesis is that the Earth is, indeed, warming, but doing so as the consequence of "a moderate, irregular 1,500-year-sun-driven cycle that governs most of the Earth's almost-constant climate fluctuations."

Global warming seems to be, among other things, a natural phenomenon, not fully understood. And while this does not mean there's no point in cutting down on greenhouse gases and cleaning up the atmosphere, it does suggest that the genuine challenge lies in dealing with the consequences of gradual warming—protecting low-lying regions of the world, for example—and not battling technology or predicting cinematic disasters for political purposes.

—Philip Terzian

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News of the World *royal correspondent Clive Goodman pleaded guilty in court to hacking into the mobile phone messages of the staff of Princes Charles, William, and Harry.* **—News item**

Parody

SCOTLAND YARD

Freddie—

It appears that Goodman's sphere of operations wasn't just Charles and the boys. He's been monitoring many more members of the House of Windsor, as well as royalty in the Middle East and Asia, too. I've attached a copy of a recent page from his diary.

Desmond

ACTIVITY LOG

	Imperial House of Japan	House of Windsor	House of Saud
Monday, Nov. 2	Empress Michiko spent several hours on flower arrangement, received compliments from onlookers.	Queen named in paternity suit by neighbor over alleged misbehavior by Welsh Corgi. Evidence is new litter of Corgi-doodles.	Prince Faisal bin Salman angry over blurry picture in home movie Theatre. Household AV Technician admitted to ER for "walking into doorknob again."
Tuesday, Nov. 3	Princess Aiko showed improvement in horsemanship but efforts in dressage described as "casual."	The Earl of Ulster feels betrayed by the infidelity of Countess Snowdon, who feels betrayed by The Lord of Snape, who feels betrayed by both The Lady of Surrey and The Earl of Fife.	Several Indian servants lost when Prince Sawad bin Khalifé, piloting yacht, attempted "Triple Turkey." Yacht coating suffered minor abrasions.
Wednesday, Nov. 4	Prince Hisahito and Princess Mako requested to go to bed later. Told to go to bed on time. Went to bed on time.	The Earl of Harewood broke his shoulder after driving tractor into topiary.	Prince Faisal bin Wallad loses fourth South Pacific island during absinthe-influenced hand of baccarat. Quietly introduced to Gamblers Anonymous.
Thursday, Nov. 5	Crown Prince Naruhito met with visiting dignitary from Gabon.	The Countess Mountbatten of Burma accidentally "clipped" a groundskeeper while boar hunting in Tanzania.	Prince Faisal bin Wallad expelled from Gamblers Anonymous after offering female in group seven white horses "for make love."
Friday, Nov. 6	Prince Akishino clearly heard dinner bell but refused to come downstairs. Stayed in room and read.	[Redacted] has syphilis again.	Prince Alwaleed bin Nayef was attended to by private physicians after accepting dare to eat Fabergé egg.

the weekly Standard

DECEMBER 25, 2006

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